DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 440 215 CE 079 962

TITLE	Action Research Monographs. Complete Set. Pennsylvania Action Research Network, 1998-99. A Section 353 Project of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education. A Learning from Practice Project.
INSTITUTION	Pennsylvania State Univ., McKeesport.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, DC.; Pennsylvania State Dept. of Education, Harrisburg. Div. of Adult Basic and Literacy Education Programs.
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	359p.; For individual monographs, see CE 079 963-985. For the project's final report, see CE 079 961.
CONTRACT	099-99-9010
AVAILABLE FROM	AdvancE, PDE Resource Center, Department of Education, 333 Market Street, Floor 11, Harrisburg PA 17126-0333. Tel: 717-783-6788; Web site: http://www.pde.psu.edu/able.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - General (020)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC15 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Action Research; Adult Education; *Adult Educators; Adult Literacy; Deafness; *English (Second Language); Family Literacy; *Goal Orientation; High School Equivalency Programs; *Literacy Education; Metacognition; Parent Participation; Pretests Posttests; *Professional Development; Program Improvement; School Holding Power; Student Motivation; Teacher Improvement; Teaching Methods; Test Selection
IDENTIFIERS	*Pennsylvania; 353 Project

ABSTRACT

This publication consists of the complete set of 23 monographs developed by the Pennsylvania Action Research Network to supplement the 67 monographs produced over the past 3 years. The specific audience are literacy, General Educational Development (GED), and English-a-a Second Language (ESL) practitioners. The titles are: "Use of Metacognitive Teaching To Enhance English Language Literacy of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adult Learners" (Robert A. Anthony); "Phonemic Awareness Education with an ESL Class" (Anne Y. Barton); "Increased Tutor Participation" (Daniel Corle); "Will the Use of Videos Designed for the Purpose of Teaching English Pronunciation Improve the Learners' Production of Discrete Sounds by At Least 80% over a 12 Week Period?" (Christina Davis); "Development of an IEP Form for Adult Students" (Ginny Edmonston); "Will Parental Incentives Increase Parental Involvement?" (Barbara Elsleger); "Contacting Students To Raise Retention Rates" (Lydia Frankenburger); "Post-Test Learner Evaluation" (Sydney Schwartz Hardiman); "Teaching Short-Term and Long-Term Goal-Setting to ESL Students for Educational, Personal, and Career Application" (Shirley F. Jackson); "Using Communication To Retain Tutors" (Judy Kline); "Peer Vocabulary Building Teams" (Pat Kriley); "Implementation of a Procedure Manual To Improve Teacher Performance" (Eileen Madgar); "Increasing Student Motivation through the Development of a Personal Mission Statement" (Jeanette G. Matthews); "Issues around Teaching Competencies in a Family Literacy Program" (Susan Finn Miller); "Integrating Professional Teaching Staff into a Volunteer-Based Agency" (Karen Mundie); "Making a Choice Between the TABE and

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

the CASAS" (Elaine Nagel); "Increasing Positive Outcomes in GED Classes through Family Literacy Programs" (Stuart Roe); "The Benefits of a Tutor Training Manual" (Stacey Roles); "Teaching Grammar in an ESL Classroom" (Timothy Shenk); "Developing an Intense Goal-Setting Portion of Student Orientation: Helping Students To Focus on Their Goals and Remain with GPLC until Those Goals Are Achieved" (Sue Snider); "One-Size-Fits-All vs. Pick-and-Choose Format" (Valorie Taylor); "Redesigning the Current Student Tracking Form" (Donna Urey); and "Conversation Partners: Work in Progress" (Lora Zangari). (YLB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION
able
PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

ED 440 217

Action Research Monographs

COMPLETE SET

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

CE 079 664

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

OPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1998/1999 Pennsylvania Action Research Network Monographs

Anthony, Robert A., Ph. D.: *Use of Metacognitive Teaching to Enhance English Language Literacy of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adult Learners*

Barton, Anne Y.: *Phonemic Awareness Education with an ESL Class*

Corle, Daniel: *Increased Tutor Participation*

Davis, Christina: *Will the Use of Videos Designed for the Purpose of Teaching English Pronunciation Improve the Learners' Production of Discrete Sounds by at Least 80% over a 12 Week Period?*

Edmonston, Ginny: *Development of an IEP Form for Adult Students*

Elsleger, Barbara: *Will Parental Incentives Increase Parental Involvement?*

Finn Miller, Susan: *Issues Around Teaching Competencies in a Family Literacy Program*

Frankenburger, Lydia: *Contacting Students to Raise Retention Rates*

Jackson, Shirley F.: *Teaching Short-Term and Long-Term Goal-Setting to ESL Students for Educational, Personal, and Career Application*

Kline, Judy: *Using Communication to Retain Tutors*

Kriley, Pat: *Peer Vocabulary Building Teams*

Madgar, Eileen: *Implementation of a Procedure Manual to Improve Teacher Performance*

Matthews, Jeanette G.: *Increasing Student Motivation Through The Development of a Personal Mission Statement*

Mundie, Karen: *Integrating Professional Teaching Staff into a Volunteer-Based Agency*

Nagel, Elaine: *Making a Choice Between The TABE and The CASAS*

Roe, Stuart: *Increasing Positive Outcomes in GED Classes Through Family Literacy Programs*

Roles, Stacey: *The Benefits of a Tutor Training Manual*

Schwartz Hardiman, Sydney: *Post-Test Learner Evaluation*

Shenk, Timothy: *Teaching Grammar in an ESL Classroom*

Snider, Sue: *Developing an Intense Goal-Setting Portion of Student Orientation: Helping Students to Focus on Their Goals and Remain With GPLC until Those Goals Are Achieved*

Taylor, Valorie: *One-Size-Fits-All vs. Pick-And-Choose Format*

Urey, Donna: *Redesigning The Current Student Tracking Form*

Zangari, Lora: *Conversation Partners: Work in Progress*

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Use of Metacognitive Teaching to Enhance English Language Literacy of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adult Learners

Action Researcher's Name:

Robert A. Anthony, Ph. D.

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940's. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners, but particularly Deaf learners, have very low English literacy levels compared to their ability levels. This occurs in spite of their education beginning at 2 or 2 1/2 years of age. In fact, the average literacy level of deaf adults in America is below a fourth grade level (CADS, 1991; Allen 1986; Trybus and Karchmer, 1977).

The population served in this study is Deaf and Hard of Hearing adult learners in the Center On Deafness Adult Basic Education Program. This is a mixed urban-rural population with some students coming from the City of Pittsburgh and others coming from small towns in southwest Pennsylvania.

The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) was used in this study. Reading pretest scores of students participating ranged from a high of 2.6 to a low of 1.9. Language pretest scores ranged from a high of 2.8 to a low of 1.1.

The intervention used for this study was a metacognitive teaching-learning process pioneered by Dr. Donald Meichenbaum. The intervention focuses on assisting students to use their knowledge and apply it to new learning or tasks, e.g., reading and comprehending a story or article.

Data were collected using pretest and post test scores of students on the TABE, samples of student writing, and observations of student learning during instruction.

The results of the TABE showed significantly less than one grade level gain from pretest to posttest. Writing samples showed no significant grammatical change but growth in content organization and elaboration. Learning clearly became more student directed.

II. PROBLEM

The Center On Deafness in Pittsburgh provides an Adult Basic and Literacy Education Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing adult learners in southwest Pennsylvania. Adult learners have ranged from 17 to 69 years of age. Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners, but particularly Deaf learners, have very low English literacy levels compared to their ability levels. This occurs in spite of their education beginning at 2 or 2 1/2 years of age. In fact, the average literacy level of deaf adults in America is below a fourth grade level (CADS, 1991; Allen, 1986; Trybus and Karchmer, 1977).

Deaf and Hard of Hearing people comprise approximately 9 percent of the total U.S. population. The incidence of hearing loss is not evenly distributed across age groups. The distribution is bipolar. There is a higher incidence of hearing loss, especially deafness in very young children than there is in children at the secondary level. As people age the incidence of hearing loss increases until it is thirty percent of the population over sixty years of age. Hearing loss, particularly deafness, is a hidden handicap. There is no overt physical manifestation of its existence. As a result of this few people are aware of the presence of deaf and hard of hearing people in the community.

The role of the Center On Deafness is multiple. It provides ABE programs of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities; it advocates in the work place to assist hiring, training, and promotion; and it provides ongoing education for deaf and hard of hearing workers whose jobs have been phased out or revised requiring that they add to their knowledge and skill base.

The low English literacy level occurs because of Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons limited proficiency in phonetic, morphological and syntactic aspects of English. This problem is further compound in pragmatic aspects of English by the absence or limited amount of incidental learning (indirect learning) caused by early onset of severe hearing loss which also reduces the general cultural knowledge base. The reduced cultural knowledge base adversely impacts reading comprehension, as does the limited proficiency in English.

Historically, deaf individuals have been taught with a great reliance on rote memory. This results in limited metacognitive skills and limited development of strategy and strategy abstraction in thinking. The teaching method and limited development in metacognitive areas causes deaf and hard of hearing learners to rely on memorization of facts and ideas instead of comprehension of them.

Use of metacognitive and strategic thinking-learning processes in teaching literacy should increase deaf and hard of hearing learner independence in mastering English literacy. More independence would lead to learners more effectively using their ability, experience and existing knowledge.

Resolution of the problem of limited English literacy would improve the number of deaf and hard of hearing individuals capable and willing to continue their battle toward English literacy.

The learning environment would be improved through learners having feelings of durable success and greater independence. This may also result in more students progressing to post secondary or technical training or obtaining employment.

III. PLANNING

Intervention plan

The intervention to be used is a metacognitive teaching-learning process pioneered by Dr. Donald Meichenbaum. This method has been shown to enhance learning at knowledge, skill and application levels. The latter is significant because it has been found that this method results in students being able to apply learning in one content domain to other content domains as well as applying what is learned to "real life" problems.

Time frame

The project began in October, 1998 and ends in May, 1999. This time period includes time for pretesting and post testing.

Materials

1) assessment instruments, 2) high interest-low difficulty reading materials, 3) Reading materials for skill building, comprehension, and application of literacy, 4) transparency projector, and 5) computers. These materials are needed to provide assessment data, learning experiences, and accommodation of the visual learning of deaf and hard of hearing students.

Data collection strategies

Initial collection of assessment data involved administration of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). The TABE is a standardized test sampling student performance in language and computational areas. Samples of student writing and observation of student learning were also taken. Each of these measures was taken at the beginning of the project and the end of the project.

Baseline

The baseline used in this project was student performance on the Test of Adult Basic Education, initial sample of student writing, and observation of student learning.

Criteria for success

Success is defined as an increase of one grade level on the TABE from pretest to post test after the October, 1998 to May, 1999 instructional period.

Constraints

There are seven constraints in this research project. Naturally, with so many constraints and their potential to have an interactive effect it is not possible to quantify the effect of each. The constraints are presented below and discussed individually.

1. Time-the procedural type of learning that is inherent to this method may require more than one year to have a complete effect.
2. Student mental habits -changing student reliance on memorization will be a primary thrust of instruction.
3. Student attitudes about self and capability to learn-deaf students typically have negative attitudes about their ability to learn.
4. Bias in testing-the bias in standardized testing is difficult to overcome. The use of portfolios, curriculum-based assessment, and individual consultation provided less bias data.
5. Student cultural knowledge and beliefs-some of the cultural knowledge base will be improved. Student beliefs about English, hearing people, and deaf people's ability to master English will be addressed through classroom instruction led by a deaf instructor fluent in American Sign Language.
6. Student learning strategies-the instructional method of this research project focuses on metacognitive and thinking-learning processes which are designed to improve student learning strategies.
7. Student self-direction-the teaching technique employed in this research is student center with an emphasis on student self-direction.

Approval

Approval to do research is achieved through review of the Research Review Committee, which approves research for the Center On Deafness. Students were also asked for their approval to participate in this research. The research goal and process were explained to the students as was their role in it. Any student not wishing to participate was assured that the more traditional instructional model was available to them.

Current literature and recommendations

a) All data available show that the teaching-learning paradigm used with deaf learners consistently results in deaf adults having an average literacy level at the 4th grade level. This literature also shows that the problem has a long history and that traditional methods have not overcome this history (CADS, 1991; Allen, 1986; Trybus and Karchmer, 1977). The pervasive effect of deaf and hard of hearing learner English literacy has been show in the area of mathematics as well. In mathematics the performance of students with hearing loss is considerably lower than for the norming groups (Daniele, 1993).

b) Current research being conducted in both the United States and Canada has shown that the method proposed herein has a positive effect on student literacy. At Friendship Valley Elementary School in Maryland, and in a Canadian school system in Toronto, the technique has resulted in improved academic learning levels and student performance. In Canada, this method has been found to be successful when used with low achieving learners.

Problem statement

Will the use of a metacognitive teaching-learning process in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adult Literacy Program at the Center On Deafness improve deaf and hard of hearing learners use of metacognition in thinking and reading tasks during the October 1998 to May 1999 program period?

IV. ACTION

The intervention involved presenting students with learning tasks, e.g., reading an article or a book. The student then followed through with reading. After completing the reading assignment, the student wrote a summary of what was read and identified new or unknown vocabulary. After all students finished their writing was converted to transparencies and discussed as a group with the writer explaining what his or her meaning was. Fellow students made suggestions about how to expand or clarify what was written. Fellow students also made suggestions about the choice of sentence style or vocabulary. The instructor served as a consultant in this process.

This resulted in identifying cultural elements that were not clear to students and vocabulary or elements of vocabulary and grammar such as pluralization, verb tense, and use of prepositions that were not clear to students. Using this material the instructor guided the students in applying what they knew about ASL to understanding English and the rules governing English.

The process helped students practice use of their metacognitive skills, knowledge base, and steps in arriving at an understanding. The process also fostered student self-direction.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing adult learners enrolled in the program were pretested prior to any instruction, counseling, or advisement. The pretest was administered in September and the first week of October. Pretesting involved administration of the TABE, collection of a writing sample from each student and observation of student learning when given a literacy task.

Pretesting was immediately followed by consultation with each student about what their learning goals were for the year. The consultation was followed by instruction using the new methodology started at the beginning of October and ran until the end of May.

Once a month each student and the instructor met to review their goal of learning and discuss progress to date. This provided time to relate instruction to more practical needs like employment, job search, and independent living.

Students attended class once a week for three hours. During Thanksgiving and the December holidays classes did not meet.

In mid May the post test was administered and data reported herein -- Table 1.

The materials used were: 1) the Test of Adult Basic Education, 2) high interest - low difficulty reading materials, 3) reading materials emphasizing application of literacy (U.S.A. Today, Pittsburgh Post Gazette, Deaf Life, NAD Broadcaster, Silent News, Deaf Nation, Inc. magazine), 4) computers to facilitate editing, 5)transparency projector for discussing student products and using the "spider network" technique of editing student work as a group. These materials accommodate the visual learning of deaf and hard of hearing students, provide learning experiences, and assessment data.

Constraints

1. Time-the procedural type of learning that is inherent to this method may require more than one year to have a complete effect. A research study done at Friendship Valley Elementary School in Maryland found no significant effect on achievement test scores until the third year. Studies currently being done at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf are also showing that it takes more time for the students to learn how to use their metacognition in learning.

2. Student mental habits -deaf individuals have traditionally been taught through memorization of facts and information. One of the constraints this research faced was deaf adult learner preference for memorization instead of comprehension and application. The technique used in the project teaches a new way to think-learn.

3. Student attitudes about self and capability to learn-deaf individuals believe that only hearing people master subjects at a higher level. This project focused instructional elements on enhancing student attitudes toward their ability to learn.

4. Bias in testing-the bias in standardized testing is difficult to overcome. The use of student writing samples, curriculum-based assessment, and individual consultation provided less bias in helping the student, but does not solve the issue of the need to compare deaf adult learners to other learners.

5. Student cultural knowledge and beliefs-the cultural knowledge base was a major constraint. The process of learning culture is mainly through indirect learning and communication. Indirect learning is limited by deafness. Communication is limited by a variety of factors: late diagnosis of hearing loss, parents unfamiliar and unskilled with communication adaptations (90% of deaf children have hearing parents), missing the primary language development period of birth to five years of age. Student cultural knowledge and beliefs about their ability to learn were addressed directly by having a deaf instructor who modeled appropriate attitudes and techniques, as well as related deaf and hearing culture

6. Student learning strategies-deaf adult learners tend to rely on memorization and rote learning to enhance knowledge. They do not tend to use their current knowledge base to know and understand new knowledge. The instructional method of this research project focuses on metacognitive and thinking-learning processes which are designed to improve student learning strategies.

7. Student self-direction-deaf adult learners were typically taught with a very teacher-centered instructional approach. The teaching technique employed in this research is student center with an emphasis on student self-direction.

Problems

There were two problems. One was that student employment kept increasing so attendance by some students stopped. Another problem was that a few students ended their attendance due to mental health issues. This decline in enrollment somewhat reduced the richness of interaction among students, especially as that applies to fewer insights from fellow students and application of different experiential bases.

V. RESULTS

The data collected with the pretest and post test of the TABE are in Table 1. The range of scores in the reading pretest was from a low of 1.7 to a high of 2.6. The reading post test scores ranged from a low of 2.1 to a high of 2.8. The Language Pretest ranged from a low of 1.1 to a high of 2.8. The range of scores on the Language Post test was from a low of 1.1 to a high of 2.8. The data show that students as a group or individually did not gain one grade level. All of the instruction focused on reading, writing, and applying student knowledge of American Sign Language to understanding English. The lack of change of scores on the math test is not significant since the one instructional time per week that students came to class was entirely spent on mastering English literacy.

Table 1
Test of Adult Basic Education
Grade Equivalent Scores

	Reading Pretest	Reading Post test	Math Pretest	Math Posttest	Language Pretest	Language Post test
Student 1	2.4	2.8	2.2	2.3	2.8	2.8
Student 2	1.7	1.9	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.3
Student 3	1.9	2.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
Student 4	2.6	2.6	3.4	3.3	2.5	2.7
Student 5	2.2	2.2	3.6	3.6	2.7	2.8

The students writing sample showed minimal improvement at the grammatical level. Students did demonstrate better content organization and elaboration in their writing. Learning was primarily student-centered. In the learner-centered environment students showed more use of their knowledge of American Sign Language to understand English at the end of instruction than at the beginning.

The project failed to increase student performance on the TABE by one grade level. Student interest in the larger culture improved. Students showed no interest and little understanding of newspapers at the beginning of instruction (October, 1998). At the end of instruction (May, 1999) students actively sought out the newspapers to read and demonstrated a better understanding of article content in class discussion and their writing. Students also used their knowledge of ASL to understand the conventions of English. One example is how they understood pluralization in English to be different from ASL. ASL uses "reduplication", i.e., repetition of a movement to pluralize, whereas English uses suffixes.

The amount of negative talk about their ability to learn also declined during instruction. In October, 1998 students were very likely to say "I can't understand. That English". At the end of instruction, students were very likely to say something about the similarities and differences in structure between ASL and English.

The problem statement that students would increase literacy on the TABE by one grade level did not happen. However, there was a change in how self-directed the students were and how much they used their own knowledge and thinking skills to understand what was read or to understand a word. It appears that the method improves the use of metacognition. The lack of gain in reading scores seems to be caused by instruction not having enough of a skills focus. So it appears that future efforts must be a blend of the more traditional content and the new instructional technique. Finally, the amount to be learned and the complexity of developing more use of metacognition necessitates a longer instructional period of time.

The course work impacted students attitudes and beliefs about their ability to learn and how to learn. From evidence obtained during counseling sessions, students had a greater tendency to look for relationships between things than to look at each bit of knowledge as discrete and separate from other knowledge.

VI. REFLECTION

Students showed more willingness to pursue English literacy and were able to relate it to the workplace. Students learning how to relate ASL to English was a major breakthrough. It was apparent that they had never been taught in a manner that used their existing ASL knowledge to try and understand another language.

The experimental method was used sufficiently but skills instruction was not used sufficiently. The measurement tools used did not regularly provide enough feedback and feelings of progress for the student. This caused some student learning to be under developed. There were not enough benchmarks of progress for the student to see. This may have reduced student confidence or interest.

What would you do differently?
Use more checklists and likert type scales to measure progress in learning.
Use more skill instruction.
Break instruction into a series of spiraled mini courses
Update the curriculum materials to provide a better literacy-maturity level match.
Identify a more comprehensive language measure to assess literacy.
Use a battery of tests at the intake point, so that student performance is more exactly determined.

This project was successful enough to merit its continuance with the modifications noted. We intend to continue researching and improving the delivery of this method of instruction.

The deaf students responded well to this type of instructional methodology. It needs more research to fully articulate it for this population.

Reference List:

Allen, T. (1986) Patterns of academic achievement among hearing impaired students: 1974 and 1983. In A. Schildroth and M. Karchmer (Eds.), *Deaf children in America* (pp 161-206). San Diego, CA: Little, Brown.

CADS (1991) Center for Assessment and Demographic Studies. *Stanford Achievement Test eight edition: Hearing-impaired norms booklet.* Washington, D.C. Gallaudet University, Gallaudet Research Institute, Center for Assessment and Demographic Studies.

Trybus, R. and Karchmer, M. (1977). School achievement scores of hearing-impaired children: National data on achievement status and growth patterns. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 122, 62-69.

Appendix:

The following represent additional resources for exploring the value of Dr. Meichenbaum's theory and practices regarding the use of metacognitive elements in teaching to increase learner performance and independence. The list can be considered dated since Meichenbaum is actively involved in several school-based studies in Pennsylvania and Canada. As of this writing, the newest book published is ***Nurturing Independent Learners: Helping Students Take Charge of Their Learning,*** by Donald Meichenbaum and Andrew Biemiller, 1998, Brookline Books, Cambridge, MA. This book presents his three dimensional model of teaching-learning called *The Three Dimensions of Mastery* which are Self-Direction Dimension, Skill and Vocabulary Dimension, and Planning/Complexity Application Dimension.

Biemiller, A., & Meichenbaum, D. (1992) The nature and nurture of student expertise. *Educational Leadership,* 50 (2), 75-80.

Biemiller, A., Shany, M., Inglis, A., & Meichenbaum, D. (in press). Factors influencing children's acquisition and demonstration of self-regulation on academic tasks. In D. schunk and B.J. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Developing self-regulated learners: From teaching to self-reflective practice.* New York: Guilford.

Meichenbaum, D. (1977). *Cognitive behavior modification: An integrative approach.* New York: Plenum Press.

Meichenbaum, D., & Biemiller, A., (1992). In search of student expertise in the classroom: A metacognitive analysis. In M. Pressley, K. Harris, & J. Guthrie (Eds.), *Promoting academic competence and literacy: Cognitive research and instructional innovation* (pp. 3-56). New York: Academic Press.

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Phonemic Awareness Education with an ESL Class

Action Researcher's Name:

Anne Y. Barton

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

In a multilevel ESL classroom, learning progress seems to be inhibited in part by a lack of understanding of the structure of the English language. After attending a phonemic awareness workshop, it seemed to this researcher that inclusion of a segment of phonemic awareness might be helpful if included in each class period held.

In an attempt to establish a baseline, I developed a survey to measure student progress and gave it to students present at my class. For the next three months I included a segment of phonemic awareness at some point in each class session. The survey was again administered to the students. The results of the second survey were inconsistent. The merit of involving phonemic awareness to adult ESL students, however, needs to be further evaluated.

II. PROBLEM

The class is held two mornings a week from 9:00 A.M. till 11:00 A.M. it is open enrollment and made up of up to twelve students representing 3 or 4 different languages, depending on attendance any given day. These students consist of Hispanic migrant workers, mostly Hispanic laborers employed in two local factories, political refugees from eastern Europe, immigrants and visitors to this country. Students of all backgrounds seem to do better if they understand the structure of the language they are learning. They find it difficult to bridge from receiving to giving language. Phonemic awareness deals with sound structure, the knowledge of which it is hoped can help the transfer to written.

III. PLANNING

The intervention plan was to include an approximately 10 minute session based on phonemic awareness in each class period. Students were asked how many words were in a sentence, then the number of syllables, and finally the number of phonemes or sound units. The phonemes were manipulated - adding, subtracting and substituting beginning, middle or ending sounds.

An improvement either by survey results or by the subjective view of student and teacher was considered a success.

A constraint on the project was the lack of consistent student attendance.

Approval was obtained by the Even Start Area Coordinator, Mrs. Kathy Paul in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. Approval was also obtained from Mr. Henry Wardrop, Special Projects Coordinator of LIU # 12.

The literature on phonemic awareness suggests that although the practice is not well studied in teaching adult ESL students, it has promise.

IV. ACTION

The students completed the attached survey. Then, for three months in each class session, exercises were completed by the students. This included counting on fingers sentence words, syllables and phonemes. The sentences were then written on the board, read out loud by the students, then copied. Some words were taken out of each sentence to manipulate sounds creating new words.

The students were then retested by using the same survey.

V. RESULTS

Eleven students initially completed the attached survey. Nine were at the beginning level. Two were high beginning. Five were in the class to complete the second survey given three months later. Of those five students only three showed improvement.

Even though phonemic awareness was reviewed twice a week for three months, written that students enjoyed the exercises.

Although the results were disappointing, the researcher is anxious to reinvestigate this approach. The survey needs to more adequately measure current student phonemic understanding.

VI. REFLECTION

It seems to the researcher that the students showed an emerging understanding of the language structure, not measured on the survey. Consistent attendance would change results and more quickly carry over into the language learning process. In this adult ESL population, however, there are many more concerns in student's lives than English language acquisition even though it seems of paramount importance to the teacher. The students showed an improvement of spelling as noted in their journal entries and more easily manipulated words and sounds in class.

It is possible that physically manipulating discs standing for the words, syllables and phonemes might reflect in a higher learning curve. A tool which more adequately measures phoneme acquisition needs to be developed.

Although phonemic awareness is thought to be a useful tool for readers with special needs, lack of phonemic awareness is an obstacle for many, particularly ESL learners.

Prior to administering the survey
Teach actions: circle, write and check
Review these words: know, write/written, alphabet, vowel, called sound, word

My name is. ____________________ The Date is ____________________

1. 1 know the English alphabet. (circle yes or no)

2. 1 can write the English alphabet. (write one letter on each line)

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

3. 1 know the vowels. (circle the ones you know)

4. Ile other letters are called ____________________

5. 1 know the sounds of the letters in the English alphabet.
(put a check () over the ones you know)

6. When I look at written English words I ______________________________

____

Results:

Date: ____________________

Alphabet sounds ____________________

Vowels ____________________

Consonants ____________________

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Increased Tutor Participation

Action Researcher's Name:

Daniel Corle

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Increased Tutor Participation

Action Researcher's Name:

Daniel Corle

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

I am having problems with low or no attendance of tutors in the South Pittsburgh area at in-services and workshops that are provided to continue the training for our tutors. Along with this problem, I believe that many of our tutors do not feel as if they are a part of our agency and feel disconnected with our overall goals. Often the tutors feel a connection only to their students and their students's goals. I believe that this relates to the lack of participation in GPLC events. Finally, I am concerned with tutor accountability. Because our tutors are volunteers, our agency needs to find ways to require more of them without turning them away. I am concerned that the lack of further training and an overall lack of accountability could be a disservice to the students we are attempting to aid.

Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council offers ESL, ABE, and GED programs to adult learners in the Greater Pittsburgh area. Trained, volunteer tutors meet with students on a one-to-one or small group setting for a total of 3-4 hours a week. Mostly the meetings are one-to-one and held in local libraries, churches, and other available public facilities. It is a mostly urban and suburban area that is included.

When I began this project in October I had canceled a few in-services for tutors due to a lack of interest. After this project, if I have anyone showing up to any of the in-services, then it will be at least a partial success.

My intervention includes providing more input from tutors, as well as, more contact with the tutors about the in-services being offered. I'm interested in learning how useful they found the in-services to be and why they attended, as well as hearing from those that did not attend to discover problems involving attendance. Part of this will include informing tutors of the in-services that should be of particular interest to them based on my observations and the needs of students. I will begin offering an Advanced Certificate for all tutors who have completed an additional 6 hours of training.

I will be collecting data using questionnaires I have devised and sent to tutors, as well as, another questionnaire sent to students. I will also be using the sign-in sheets we use for our in-services, as well as, a questionnaire on the in-service itself I will also be including some student pre- and post-test scores.

Upon the conclusion of this project I have discovered that my intervention, while

improving slightly, has had very little affect on the involvement of tutors in my area and that I would need to apply additional interventions in order to improve attendance at GPLC in-services and improving the involvement of tutors.

II. PROBLEM

The South Pittsburgh office of Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council includes 12 Pittsburgh area neighborhoods, mostly urban with a few suburban areas. My clientele include students from various backgrounds and ages beginning at age 17. The tutors are also from various backgrounds throughout the area. Presently, I have approximately 35 students and approximately 20 tutors. My role, as coordinator for the office, includes a variety of duties, but I will focus on the areas most directly related to and affecting tutors and the problem at hand. As part of our intake process, I interview all tutors and students in my area and provide information about our program to individuals who call my office. After a tutor finishes our program's 12-hour tutor training sessions I contact the tutor about students they could potentially be matched with. After deciding on the match, I meet with the tutor and go over the materials, forms, and information we have provided. After that, I maintain contact with the tutor, especially during the "probationary period", or first 15 hours, providing support and information. Tutor observations, where I sit in on a session, are conducted on a monthly basis. Throughout the year a minimum of 4 training opportunities are provided in the South Pittsburgh area, not to mention the opportunities in other areas. A newsletter is produced quarterly, providing tutor tips, information on in-services and other GPLC-related activities, and an assortment of other useful information.

The tutors meet with their students in a public place with occasional contact with the agency through phone calls, quarterly newsletter from the coordinator, GPLC events and in-services, and possibly a visit. The tutor is required to send monthly reports to the area coordinator; however, these are not always turned in to the coordinators.

I believe that GPLC could more sufficiently prepare our tutors for lesson planning. As an organization, we could also increase how much we stress the importance of continued training and interaction with other tutors. I'm having problems getting tutors to attend workshops that our program holds to assist tutors with further training. Since joining Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council, as part of my duties, I have been arranging for tutor trainings to be made available to tutors in my area. Despite holding these trainings at various times throughout the day and the week, I have had very little response to them. In fact, I have been forced to cancel a majority of them due to lack of interest, i.e. no one had called to register for them. Unfortunately, this problem was most likely exacerbated by the change in office location and lack of answering service for many months. I have been forced to relocate my office once again during this project which has also had a stultifying impact on the performance of my interventions. Part of the problem created was that I was unsure of what spaces would be available for my use.

Finally, I believe that our agency could do more to offer the tutors opportunities to evaluate our program's effectiveness and level of support. The only feedback we receive from tutors is on the monthly reports, which doesn't allow for much critical feedback.

I believe that improving the attendance of tutors at in-services and other GPLC-related events would have two positive effects. First, I believe that more area tutors would continue tutoring for a longer period of time with our agency and feel more positively about their involvement in our agencies program. Second, I believe that the improved attendance would result in improved tutoring skills and therefore result in more fruitful tutoring sessions and greater improvement of our students' skills. This would possibly increase student test scores, retention, and provide more opportunities for program improvement through a greater understanding of our tutors' needs.

III. PLANNING

First, I created and mailed an evaluation form to all tutors in my area, asking them to complete the form. This evaluation was mailed for both an interim and final data collection process, as well as informational for the continued progress of my action research.

Second, I also contacted students over the phone and asked them to complete an evaluation. Like the tutor evaluation form, this had both an interim and final data collection process involving the contact of both new and old students.

Third, I engaged in a more aggressive marketing of the workshops being offered. I sent updated information about the workshops along with recommendations for specific tutors to attend.

Fourth, I offered an Advanced Certificate for all tutors who completed an additional 6 hours of training.

I considered it a success if 20% of my area tutors had attended each in-service. This percentage would have required 4 tutors to attend each in-service. I also wanted to have a minimum of one tutor receive an Advanced Certificate. I also considered it a success if 50% of the tutors in my area had responded to questionnaires and if they increased the rating of how connected they felt to our agency was raised by a point.

I mailed the tutor evaluations at the beginning of October and began contacting students at the beginning of November. Tutors received a mailing about the Advanced Certificate in the mail. along with more information about workshops in November. I engaged in an interim evaluation of the progress of my action research in January and concluded the research in April.

I needed staff support to help me create the Advanced Certificate, as well as for the trainings and workshops. I needed additional materials to offer my tutors for their lessons.

The data I collected includes: Tutor Evaluations, Student Evaluations, Student Test Scores, Workshop Attendance, and conversations with students and tutors.

I compared the data collected through the above methods during the time of the interventions with the data collected prior to the enactment of the interventions. I based my success on the improvement of the above specified criteria.

There were a few problems which interfered with my interventions. The continued difficulty for tutors to reach me, due to the continued changes in my office environment. The time and distance constraints that tutors had to overcome in order to increase their participation. A general lack of participation from tutors and students.

I attempted to overcome the time and distance constraints of my tutors by attempting to tailor the time and location of workshops to those which would most likely suit my tutors based on the available information including where they work and live and the times they have designated as open for tutoring. I also increased the time I spend in contact with tutor, both initially and afterwards, and more heavily stressed the importance of workshops attendance.

When I first began this research I was unaware of any literature on this issue, but since that time I have found some related literature. For one, my supervisor was involved in a PALPIN project dealing with volunteer retention. I also came across and article by Steve McCurley about a number of issues dealing with volunteers. Neither of these specifically dealt with the problem in my action research, but each discussed some issues that are related and are helpful in considering other interventions for the future.

My problem statement is: "Will the implementation of a more aggressive marketing campaign, including an opportunity for Advanced Certification, in an Adult Education program improve tutor attendance at in-services to 20% and increase the interaction between tutors over a 6 month period?"

IV. ACTION

I was holding an in-service in December on Conquering GED Math Anxiety, so I concentrated my efforts on directing tutors to this in-service. I began by sending a letter about the in-service, while also including information on two other GPLC in-services in my winter edition of the quarterly newsletter I send to all my tutors. In this letter, I also informed all my tutors that I would now be supplying Advanced Tutor Certificates to all tutors who attended 6 hours of additional trainings. For tutors whom I felt this in-service would be particularly beneficial to, I made a special note on the letter that I believed they should register for this particular in-service. After sending out the mailings, I began to make phone calls to tutors, sometimes leaving messages and other times speaking with them directly. The in-service was held on a Saturday at my office in the South Side. The week of the in-service I had three tutors registered, but only one showed up. Although I was disappointed with the turn-out, I was happy that at least one person showed up.

The next in-service I held in my area was in February. This in-service dealt with teaching reading comprehension strategies and was also held on a Saturday. In January I sent out my quarterly newsletter. In this newsletter I highlighted the in-services that would be held in my area in the next few months. Once again I sent mailings to my tutors to remind them of the in-service followed by phone calls. I had three possible tutors from my area and one tutor from another coordinator\"s area registered to attend. One of my tutors arrived along with the tutor from the East End. Again it might be said that I improved attendance, increasing to two tutors, and that at least I didn't need to cancel the in-service, but I still wasn't satisfied with the results.

The next in-service was the one I was most interested in because it was an opportunity for tutors to meet with each other and discuss some of their challenges and successes. Unfortunately, this was held in the beginning of March, which was during the time when my previous office space was undergoing a chaotic transitional period. The Welfare office had taken over the lease for the building I was located in and no one was doing much to include our organization in the planning or even in providing us with information about what was to happen to our office space. This prevented me from supplying the kind of effort I had made for the last two in-services and I was forced to cancel it.

Finally, I had moved to my new office on April 1st and hoped to have tutors attend a tutor talk/open house. Keeping this in mind I included in my spring newsletter a set of times that I would be holding an open house/tutor talk. I wasn't able to send out the newsletter until the week before the set dates, but I hoped that by giving three dates I would be offering enough flexibility to the tutors to attend one of them or to at least receive some responses about why the could not come. I had a Friday afternoon, a Sunday morning and a Monday evening set aside for tutors and their students to come to my new office space. Unfortunately, no one appeared to be interested and I was once again forced to cancel.

This intervention began in October and continued through the middle of April. Unfortunately it was interrupted throughout the entire month of March due to difficulties with my previous office space and time spent locating my current office space.

Another important constraint that I haven't mentioned yet is the restraint on myself to hold in-services at certain times. I believe that tutors are probably most likely to attend in-services in the evenings through the week, but this was not an option I generally had available to me. I was constrained by the fact that I had no free evenings through the week to hold any in-services and therefore I am uncertain as to whether or not this might have been a time more convenient to my tutors. This brings me to question whether or not we might be able to schedule in-services for our tutors without requiring ourselves, as coordinators, to be there, Perhaps, as long as some member of staff is there to facilitate and it is held in our area, I might have had more success scheduling in-services with a higher attendance rate.

V. RESULTS

The first group of data to be summarized was an evaluation form I sent to all the tutors in my area. I have included a copy of the form for reference. This form was devised to get input from tutors about how prepared they felt and if they felt that they were receiving enough support and interaction from myself and our organization. This form was devised to take very little time and to be very easy to follow, while still providing me with sufficient information about the tutor and our program. I used 10 question; three of which were open-ended and seven which used a scale of 1-10 which the respondents could answer by simply circling a number. Unfortunately, I only received four forms. The small number of respondents is a clear indicator of the problems of tutor involvement. The other important part of this evaluation was that it was anonymous. I felt that this would be important to ensure honest answers. But the anonymity prevented me from pursuing tutors to complete the form. Unlike the form I used with students, I was unable to call tutors to insure that they respond.

I labeled the forms: A, B, C, D, and E (which came in while I was revising the paper) and will be referring to the tutors by the letter I used to label each form.

Question	Tutor A	Tutor B	Tutor C	Tutor D	Tutor E	Average
#2	8	6	10	7	10	8.2
#3	8	8	10	8	10	8.8
#4	9	9	10	6		8.5
#6	9	8	10	10	10	9.2
#7	9	9		9	10	9.25
#8		6	1	9	10	6.5
#10			10	7	10	9

The first question was open-ended question the Tutor Training and it appears that tutors felt positively about the training except for tutor D's doubts about the ability to apply it and tutor A's apprehension about math. Tutor B responded that the ESL training wasn't as satisfying. Tutor E mentioned feeling exhilarated and hopeful.

The second question asked how well prepared each tutor felt after the training. Overall, it appears that tutors feel well-prepared on a scale of 1-10. Tutor D was the one who felt that the information was excellent, but doubted herself as a tutor. In fact, in times I spoke with her, she questioned her own ability in working with her student and wondered if her student might do better with someone else. Tutor B appears to have included both ESL and Basic tutor trainings in her evaluation.

The third question was very helpful. It asked the tutors how well prepared they each felt after meeting with their coordinator. The three high scores remained the same and the two low scores moved up. Two scores were tens to begin with, so only a downward trend would be noteworthy, but what I think is important is that both tutors who felt slightly less comfortable, raised their feeling of comfort to an 8 after meeting with the coordinator. I believe this shows that the initial meeting with the coordinator is very important, particularly to tutors who are feeling apprehensive or overwhelmed by the workshop.

The fourth question asked how each tutor felt after meeting their respective students for the first time. Again the trend was generally upward, though the average remained at an 8.5 due to Tutor D now showing a new low of a 6 on the comfort scale. I believe that the reason for Tutor D's sharp decline was due to the fact that this tutor was working with a low-level student who very likely has learning problems, resulting in her frustration. In fact, I have spoken with this tutor about contacting Dr. Cooper and attending workshops on LD. The tutor has mentioned the need for more training in that area in the next question.

Question five is the second open-ended question, asking about the areas that each tutor feels the need for more training. Tutor A said nothing even though this tutor has attended a workshop on reading comprehension and is signed up to attend one on math. Tutor B wanted more training on grammar. Tutor C didn't answer this question and Tutor D wanted more LD training, despite having attended one in-service on LD already. Tutor E indicated none needed.

Question six asked about the usefulness of the materials. All the tutors gave high marks on this question. Therefore, we should feel pretty secure with the types of materials we are providing and the time spent with the tutors reviewing them.

Question seven also received high marks. This question asked the tutors if they were receiving enough support from their coordinators and GPLC.

Question eight was probably the most interesting question on the form. It asks how much each tutor feels a part of the GPLC organization. Tutor C responded that our organization doesn't use her enough in our trainings and activities. I felt this was very interesting though considering the high rating from question seven about the amount of support tutors receive from the agency. It is also interesting considering all of the tutors who responded, except Tutor B and Tutor E (this tutor is brand new and wouldn't\' have had the opportunity) have attended at least one in-service.

Question nine asks which workshops each tutor has attended as well as asking why they have attended workshops or why not. The largest interference seemed to be location, though time was also important and how other commitments infringed upon that time.

Question ten asks how prepared each tutor felt after the workshop. At the time of this questionnaire only two had attended workshops: Tutors B and D. Tutor C remained at a 10, while Tutor D moved back up to how she felt immediately following the initial tutor training.

Each of these tutors sends in their tutor monthly reports regularly, which is not very common among other tutors and can most likely explain why they responded to the questionnaire. Each has received a varying amount of contact from me ranging from little: Tutor C; moderate: Tutors A and B; and frequent: Tutors D and E. A lot of this is due to Tutor D's frustrations with her student, requiring constant contact.

An important finding in this survey is that generally at each phase of additional training or involvement in the tutoring or training process, the tutors feel more prepared. After the tutor training the tutors generally raised their feeling of preparedness after meeting with the coordinator, meeting their student, and/or attending an additional training. The only time there was a decline was with Tutor D upon meeting the low-level student with learning problems, but even this decreased score was countered by an increased score after additional training.

At the end of the questionnaire, I opened up the opportunity for additional comments. Tutor E wrote that all the trainers did an excellent job and that the coordinator let him know that he could count on continued support whenever needed. The tutor also mentioned that he is glad to be a part of an excellent program.

I also did a questionnaire with students about their tutors. Overall, the students responded positively about their tutors, but to the point that it doesn't seem reflective of the reality. This could be because the students don't really know what should be expected of their tutoring sessions. Another reason might be that the students are concerned that either this information will get back to the tutor or that their answers might cost them their tutor. The first assumption could be based on the belief that I might reprimand or question the tutor who doesn't receive high marks from their student and that the tutor will assume that this was the result of student complaints. The second fear might be aggravated by the fact that some of my students have waited a considerable amount of time for their tutor and are afraid, not only of losing their tutor, but also waiting a long time for another match.

Since we are dealing with literacy students, I decided that it would be best for me to complete the questionnaire via phone interviews, rather than by sending them through the mail. Although this prevents anonymity, it was more successful at pooling a larger number of respondents.

Two of the students who completed the questionnaire are matched with tutors who returned the evaluation form. In all, eight students completed the questionnaire. Students A and D correspond to Tutors A and 1), while all others did not have tutors who also filled out questionnaires.

The first question asked if the student and tutor met regularly. Every student answered this affirmatively, despite the fact that I know this was not always true.

Question	A	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Average
#2	10	7	10	10	10	10	10	10	9.6
#3	10	8	10	10	9	10	10	10	9.6
#4	10	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	9.8
#5	8	7	10	10	10	8	10	10	9.1
#6	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
#7	10	8	10	10	10	10	10	10	9.7
#8	2	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	8.5
#9	10	6	10	8	10	10	10	10	9.2
#11	10	8	10	10	10	10	10	10	9.7

In all the other questions, all six of the students who did not have a tutor who also completed a questionnaire gave 10's except for one 9 on the question about being taught lessons that the student wants to learn and an 8 on receiving encouragement from their tutor. The two students whose tutors also responded to a questionnaire had a little more variety in their responses. The student matched with Tutor A also gave the tutor a 10 on how well prepared the tutor was, despite the tutor giving an 8 on the corresponding question on the tutor questionnaire. The student matched with Tutor D gave a 7 on this question, which matched up with the score given by the tutor on the tutor questionnaire. The student matched with Tutor A mostly fell in line with the responses given by the other students except for a few times. On question five a score of 8 was given on whether or not the lessons were too difficult or too hard. This is still a high score, but the fact that the student didn't give the same number for each question makes all the other answers a little more believable. This student gave a 2 on question eight, asking how often a tutor uses a variety of activities. Despite a low score on something I believe would be influential on the other answers, all other scores were a 10. I would've thought that a low score on this question would mean that the lessons were boring or not always reflective of the learning strengths of the student, thereby making the lessons too difficult. In fact, maybe that is why the score was lowered to an eight on that question.

The student matched with Tutor D had even more variety in the responses to the questions. I already mentioned the answer to question two, so I'll begin with the score on lessons being on subjects that the student wanted to learn which was an 8. Question four asked if the lessons were on things the student believed were subjects that needed to be learned. This was scored a 9. The fifth question, whether the lessons were too hard or too easy was rated a 7. The tutor received a 10 on encouragement in question six. Question seven, how comfortable do you feel with the tutor and the location received an 8. Question eight, how often does your tutor use a variety of activities in the lesson and question nine, how often do you ask your tutor for clarification when you don't understand both received scores of 6. Question ten, in what areas could the tutor better serve you, elicited a response about making the topics more interesting. Finally, the final question about how much support is given by the coordinator and the agency was scored an 8. The student matched with Tutor D seemed to respond less diplomatically than the other students, but even these responses seem a little high given the circumstances.

I included information on the four students who were post-tested in the program. The students with Tutors A and D improved their test scores by an average of 2.7 compared to the other two students average of 2.1. If these results were found to be true throughout the program, then I believe this would give more impetus to requiring tutors to attend in-services and could be used as a tool to convince tutors to attend.

		Pre-test	Post-test
Student A	Verbal	5.5	8.2
	Comp	7	9.3
Student D	Verbal	6	9.3
	Comp	0	2.5
No Survey	Verbal	6.8	5.8
	Comp	6.7	PHS
Student J	Verbal	8	9.4
	Comp	10.1	PHS

I have also collected some information from tutors and records of the time spent with individual tutors. Of the four tutors that have attended in-services in the past year, all have continued to tutor for our agency. In that same period of time, I have had 8 tutors leave my area. One tutor that attended an in-service wrote on a monthly progress report that the in-service that was attended was found to be very useful and that a math in-service would be appreciated.

VI. REFLECTION

Looking back at the in-services I held in my area in the past year I can see how the interventions worked, but there are even more questions that have been raised and more ways I need to approach my problem. Before I began this project, I was forced to cancel my previous four in-services. After I began this project, I was able to hold two in-services for my tutors and cancel two of my in-services. The two in-services I was able to hold were ones that received more of my attention and effort, including letters and follow-up phone calls. The two in-services I was forced to cancel did not receive the same kind of attention and therefore had less of a chance for success. This shows me that more contact with the tutors about the in-services will indeed improve attendance.

The question left unanswered is how much contact is required for tutors to attend. I have not had a single tutor mention an interest in the Advanced Tutor Certificate I offered which leads me to believe that it was not effective. It would have been nice if I had thought to include something about the Certificate in one of my questionnaires. Finally, due to the fact that I had a very low attendance rate, I obviously need to look into other ways to bring tutors into my in-services. The results of this project show that the less prepared a tutor feels, the more support they need from our organization from both coordinator contact and available in-services. One thing that should be instituted is a mini-questionnaire used by coordinators at the end of their initial contact with the tutor to discover their comfort level and/or a follow-up to that after they have met with their student initially. As an agency, we need to look into any way we might increase contact between the tutors and our agency. I also believe that we need to explain the importance of continued training to our tutors.

One of the things that I thought was interesting to note was that the two students whose tutors also responded to a questionnaire seemed more inclined to deviate from scoring a 10 on everything. I still wonder if this had to due with the actual tutoring or if they were more honest and careful.

Some important lessons can be learned from the information on Tutor D and the student. Although, as coordinators we often feel desperate to match students, we need to be more aware of the needs of our students and the skill level of our tutors. I realize now that a student with learning problems should only be matched with an experienced tutor who has been to LD in\-services.

There are some things, as a coordinator, that I might be able to implement to help solve my problem. I could institute a required re-training period for my tutors, perhaps every 6 months. If a tutor did not further their training within that time, they could be placed as temporarily inactive until they had attended an additional training. I believe this would require approval from my supervisor. I also believe that a yearly schedule would be useful. It might be better for tutors to see the opportunities for them throughout the year so that they could better plan for which ones they would like to attend. Sometimes tutors have told me that they put off attending an in-service because they assumed that it would be offered again and that the next offering might be more convenient. This would be particularly useful, in the long run, if this schedule was used each year. This doesn't mean the in-services remain the same yearly, but that the times remain the same. I also think that I should have reviewed the in-service schedule with new tutors upon our first meeting and taken time to discuss the upcoming events with them, in particular if they might be useful to the student they are matched with.

Some institutional changes are perhaps more in order to deal with the problems I have been facing, rather than relying on my ability to pull in tutors for events. As an agency, we should look at requiring a tutor to attend an in-service after meeting with the student for 50 hours, to correspond with the post-testing of the student. Also, we might want to speak with a tutor about a possible match, while discussing some of the relevant in-services that must be taken in order to be matched with this particular student.

I have found that my interventions have lead to the collection of some useful information and some ideas that could be used to motivate tutors to attend more in-services.

Evaluation Form

Date: Coordinator:

---

1. How did you feel after the Tutor Training Workshop? ____________________

____

____

2. How well prepared to tutor did you feel?
(not very) **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10** (very)

3. How prepared did you feel after you met with your coordinator?
(not very) **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10** (very)

4. How did you feel after you met with your student a few times?
(not very) **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10** (very)

5. In what areas did you not feel fully prepared or would have liked more training?_

____

____

____

6. How useful did you feel the materials (books, etc.) you received were?
(not very) **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10** (very)

7. Do you receive enough support from your coordinator/GPLC?
(not very) **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10** (very)

8. Do you feel like a part of the GPLC organization?
(not very) **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10** (very)

9. Have you attended any of the workshops or events hosted or sponsored by GPLC? Which ones? Why or why not?______________________________

____

____

____

10. How prepared did you feel after attending the workshop?
(not very) **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10** (very)

Please use the back if you need more space to answer a question or to make any additional comments.

Tutor Update Form

Date:
Tutor:
Tutoring Location:
Student:

1. Do you meet regularly with your tutor? Why or why not?

2. Your tutor seems prepared?
(rarely) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (always)

3. The lessons are on things that you want to learn?
(rarely) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (always)

4. The lessons are on things that you need to learn?
(rarely) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (always)

5. The lessons are not too difficult or too easy?
(rarely) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (always)

6. Your tutor gives you encouragement throughout the lesson?
(rarely) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (always)

7. How comfortable do you feel with your tutor and the location?
(not very) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (very)

8. Your tutor uses a variety of activities in the lessons?
(rarely) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (always)

9. You ask questions when you don't entirely understand your tutor?
(rarely) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (always)

10. In what areas could your tutor serve you better?

11. You are gettting enough support from your coordinator and GPLC?
(rarely) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (always)

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION
able
PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
Special Project
A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Will The Use Of Videos Designed For The Purpose Of Teaching English Pronunciation Improve The Learners' Production Of Discrete Sounds By At Least 80% Over A 12 Week Period?

Action Researcher's Name:

Christina Davis

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

A great concern among the ESL learners at the Lebanon Adult Education Center is correct English pronunciation. I find this to be one of the top priorities with my intermediate class. I conducted this project to find out if using videotapes that were designed for the purpose of teaching English pronunciation would improve the learners' pronunciation. The videotapes that were used are entitled Perfect English Pronunciation. The learners were given a pretest. The pretest consisted of groups of words that utilized the various sounds that are used in English pronunciation. These sounds were heard in the beginning, middle, or end of words. Throughout the project, I observed the learners and kept field notes. At the end of the project, the learners were given a posttest. The results were used as the criterion to determine success.

II. PROBLEM

The Lebanon Adult Education Center is located in an urban setting, which is comprised of a multi-cultural community. As a result, my class's population is also multi-cultural. The nationalities that are represented in my class are Cambodian, Vietnamese, Korean, Puerto Rican, Dominican Republican, Mexican, Colombian, Tunisian, Russian, Haitian, and East Indian. As you can see, this is a diverse group. As diverse as they may be, they all have at least one thing in common. They all want to learn the English language, and "perfect" pronunciation is very important to each of them.

Many of the sounds that we use in the English language are foreign to our learners. They do not use these sounds in their own language and therefore do not know how or what to do to produce these sounds. This is the reason the problem with pronunciation is so prevalent. As stated before, I currently teach the intermediate ESL class. However, having previously taught the beginner class, I know emphasis is placed on "Survival English". Once a learner completes the beginner class and advances to the intermediate class, it seems that pronunciation becomes one of his or her top priorities.

Improvement of the learners' pronunciation would not only benefit the learners but also our school. Both the learners' communication and reading would improve greatly. As a result, the learners would be more confident and more likely to converse with others in English. This may occur in the work place, their children's school, the doctor's office, the grocery store, etc. The learners will also be able to better communicate with each other in the classroom and thus form friendships with their classmates. Some of the learners are shy and reluctant to read aloud or express themselves because of mispronunciation, If the pronunciation problems were solved, they would be more willing to participate in class. Whomever the learners come in contact with should notice a change. When questioned about his or her English improvement, the learner will hopefully credit our school. As this information is passed from person to person, our enrollment should increase.

III. PLANNING

The proposed intervention for this project was videotapes. These videotapes were designed for the purpose of teaching English pronunciation. The learners are in class twelve hours each week if they attend regularly. Each class is three hours long and held four mornings a week. I decided to use half of the class time each day for this project. I didn't want to overwhelm the learners. The timeline for the project was ten weeks.

The use of a television, VCR, and videotapes was needed for the project. But the most important thing needed was the cooperation of the learners. In order to collect data throughout the project, field notes, logs, and tests of the learners' performances were utilized. The criterion for success was based on an 80% improvement rate among the learners.

The pretests and posttests will provide the means to evaluate the project. The learners will be given a pretest, which consists of groups of words utilizing various sounds that are used in English pronunciation. These sounds are found in the beginning, middle, or end of words. The sounds with which the learners had difficulty would be charted. At the end of the project, the learners would be given a posttest with the same groups of words. As stated, the criterion for success would be an 80% improvement rate among the learners.

The attendance rate of the learners would have a deep impact on the project; therefore, I only included those learners who attended regularly. The shyness of some of the learners was another constraint that had to be addressed. I had to find a way to get them comfortable enough to actively participate. Because the learners feel more relaxed and talkative during the last half of the period, I decided to conduct the project during this time. Also, because the classes at the Lebanon Adult Education Center have an open entry and open exit policy, I only included learners that were enrolled during the beginning of the project.

To conduct this project, I needed the approval of both my administrator and the participating learners. After receiving approval from my administrator, I explained the project to the selective learners and received their verbal consent.

IV. ACTION

The learners were given a pretest before viewing the videotapes. I compiled a list of words that utilized the various sounds used in English pronunciation. These sounds were heard in the beginning, middle, or end of the words. I would say each word and have the learners repeat the word. I made a chart for each learner and charted the results of the pretest. After testing all the learners, I compared the results of each one. I compiled a list of the common and isolated sounds that were mispronounced. Most of the learners shared the same mispronunciation errors. Although there were some sounds that the learners could pronounce without any difficulty, we viewed both videotapes in their entirety. Including the testing time, the project took twelve weeks to complete.

I decided to use the last half of the class period for the project. This gave the learners time to warm up and feel more comfortable. I knew that they would be more reluctant to participate during the beginning of class. Participation was very important because the video instructed the learners to repeat the sounds, words, and sentences.

We began with the video, which covered the pronunciation of consonants. At first, some of the learners were too shy to repeat the sounds. They were reluctant to open their mouths and imitate the models. But with the encouragement of some of the other learners and me, they participated.

What originally started out as a pronunciation lesson soon turned into a vocabulary lesson as well. Many of the words used in the video were foreign to the learners. The video introduced a sound and demonstrated how to produce and pronounce the sound. Words and sentences were then given for the learners to repeat. After the lesson for each individual sound, I paused or stopped the video to review the lesson. We also did different exercises to further reinforce the sounds that proved to be more difficult. After we completed the consonant video, we proceeded with the video that covered vowels, diphthongs, and word endings. We followed the same procedure as we had done with the consonant video.

During the twelve-week period, I carefully noted the pronunciation of the learners during the first half of the class. I listened as they conversed with each other in order to see if they were putting into practice what they had learned. After viewing and reviewing both videotapes, the learners were given a posttest. The posttest included the same groups of words that were included in the pretest.

V. RESULTS AND REFLECTION

The results of the project were positive. Each learner showed at least an 80% improvement in their English pronunciation of discrete sounds. There were a few students that demonstrated a 95% improvement.

The project proved to be very beneficial for the learners. It has not only helped with their English pronunciation but has also helped them to develop more confidence in themselves. In class they are communicating more with each other; they are not just seeking those who share their language. I have heard the learners trying to correct and help other learners with pronunciation. The learners are volunteering more to read aloud in class, and their reading has greatly improved. They have told me that they can now better converse with others in their communities and also feel better about handling their own affairs.

The fact that the project was a success was demonstrated by meeting the 80% improvement criterion. But more importantly, I feel the attitude and the confidence of the learners better demonstrate the success of the project.

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION
able
PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
Special Project
A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Development of an IEP Form for Adult Students

Action Researcher's Name:

Ginny Edmonston

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

The Clinton County Development Center for Adults conducted a research project to find out to what extent the development of a form for an individualized education plan (IEP) for the adult learners in the ABE/GED program improved the planning and evaluation process. The project involved collaboration with other instructors in the program to gather their ideas. Twenty-two Literacy Corps tutors from Lock Haven University were involved in the project as well. The work on the form began in mid-November 1998 and continued through mid-January 1999. By the first of February the students' files contained an IEP form as complete as possible. An intern from Lock Haven University, our VISTA volunteer and I worked on completing the proposed form. During the first two weeks of February, the Literacy Corps tutors were matched with the adult learners. Eleven of the student files given to the Literacy Corps tutors contained a completed IEP form and the other eleven did not contain the form. The object of the control group was to see how much, if any, the IEP form made in the planning and evaluation process for the tutors. Also, their comments would provide additional feedback enabling me to draw conclusions such as, "Is the information that is included on the form appropriate and/or sufficient to the process?" "If so, what difference did it make in planning and evaluation?" "What additional changes need be made at this time?"

II. PROBLEM

The research for this project is to be conducted at the Clinton County Development Center for Adults in Lock Haven in the ABE/GED classes. The setting is rural and the adult learners in these classes are working on all levels of abilities including beginning literacy through intermediate ABE, GED prep and adult secondary. The program also serves a few ESL students. Our adult students range in age from teens to the fifties.

The problem is that the information necessary to designing and implementing an educational plan for the adult learners in our program is not contained in the learners' files in any specific order. In many instances, I have discovered an inconsistency of information contained in these files as well.

I am a new instructor to this program and to the field of adult education. (My previous teaching experience was in elementary education.) The previous instructor left after having been in this position eight years. My questions and frustrations, as well as those of another instructor new to this program, as we worked to become familiar with this instructional process and the learners were many. Additionally, we experienced the frustration of the PAL tutors and the Literacy Corps tutors and they went through the same process. The need for change was great, so the idea of an IEP form began to emerge.

The Lock Haven University Literacy Corps tutors work with the adult learners for approximately three months. In order to maximize their effectiveness, it is very important that these tutors have the information to begin planning and working effectively with tutees quickly. In the past it has taken approximately two to three weeks for the tutors to interpret the information in the student files and design and implement an appropriate education plan for their tutee(s). The tutor coordinator has had to have several meetings with each tutor in the initial period after training. I am suggesting that with the additional information presented in the organized format offered with the proposed IEP form, the educational planning and evaluation period may be shortened, thus making for more efficient use of everyone's time.

III. PLANNING

The intervention plan begins with collaboration with other instructors to provide the necessary information and ideas upon which to base a proposed IEP (Appendix A) for the adult learners in the ABE/GED program. Literacy Corps tutors from Lock Haven University will provide the control group to test the form. One half of the tutors will use student files containing the completed IEP and the other half of the tutors will not have the benefit of the IEP in the student files. My conclusions on the effectiveness of the IEP will be based on this control group. Their performance, questions and comments will give me additional insight into the plan from that of the instructors' group.

By mid-December 1998 the rough draft of the IEP is to be completed. The student files need to be updated with the completed IEP's by the end of January 1999. The tutor/tutee matches will made in early February 1999. Observations and notes will be made until the first week in May 1999. Final interviews with the tutors will also conducted at the beginning of May. Conclusions will drawn with the information collected until mid-May. Changes will be made to the proposed plan (Appendix B) at that time.

Materials for this project will include: computer for typing forms, rough draft (Appendix A) and revised plan (Appendix B), copier for making copies of IEP's for adult learners' files, paper for copies, tape recorder/tapes for taping interviews, pens and journal for collecting notes.

Data collecting strategies will include the following: the data collecting strategies that will be used are interviews - some of which will be taped, keeping a journal, field notes and anecdotal records.

The baseline will be the twenty-two Literacy Corps tutors from Lock Haven University who will be matched with an equal number of adult learners as tutees. Eleven of the tutee files will contain a completed IEP, the other eleven files will not. I will compare the amount of time it takes for each group to evaluate its students and develop/implement teaching strategies for them. I expect to see a quicker transition (less than three weeks) to the teaching process from the group with the completed IEP's. Another measure of success will be to compare these tutors' experiences against the experiences of the tutors from the fall of 1998 semester. I fielded their questions and frustrations with the current system as they began tutoring many of the same adult learners. These experiences motivated me to develop a plan for change.

The goal of this project is to shorten the evaluation and planing process and to see a quicker and smoother transition (less than three weeks) to the teaching process. Tutors' questions and frustrations will be taken into account as well.

The constraints will be the amount of time I am able to work on this project in addition to my job-related responsibilities.

The problem statement is: "To what extent will the development of an IEP form for adult learners improve the evaluation and planning process by instructors and tutors?"

IV. ACTION

The intervention began by using a proposed IEP form developed in collaboration with another instructor in this adult education program by mid-December 1998. I then gave the proposed form to two other staff members, gave them time to review the work, and then asked them to comment. The comments were reviewed in interviews and an ABE team meeting. By the end of January the final draft of the proposed form was implemented into each adult learner's file. This was done with the assistance of a work-study intern from Lock Haven University (LHU) and a VISTA volunteer.

The next part of the intervention process started at the beginning of February with twenty-two Literacy Corps tutors from Lock Haven University. These tutors were used as the control group. Eleven tutors were matched with adult learners whose files contained a completed IEP on our draft form. The other eleven tutors were matched with adult students whose files had the completed IEP removed. The tutors met with me individually, within the first week (required), after having familiarized themselves with the students' files. They were free to request other meetings with me and also to ask questions whenever they felt it was necessary. The purpose was to empower the tutors to begin working as quickly as possible. I provided whatever support was needed during The tutoring experience, so the were giving me constant feedback for about three months. This information was utilized when making revisions the IEP form.

V. RESULTS

In summarizing the data, I found that the overall results of this action research were positive. Having an IEP was beneficial in becoming familiar with new students. The tutors with the IEP forms (Group 1) did begin the actual instructional process much quicker, most in less than two weeks. The tutors who had to begin without the completed IEP form (Group 2) had a much more difficult time determining where to start working with their tutees. They had more questions and spent more time with me. It took these tutors approximately three weeks to really understand where their adult learners needed help.

After the *group 2* tutors got started working with their tutees, the idea occurred to me to give this group a blank IEP form and have them begin to fill it out. Through their feedback, I realized that although I understood what we, as instructors, wanted to see included on the IEP form, not everyone who would have access to if found it helpful, especially when it came to filling in the blanks. I realized that too much information can be included and that a long cumbersome form is not good either. The form (Appendix B) is still undergoing revisions and that we probably still do not have the final version of the form we are looking for. The more we use it, the more refined it will become.

Another impact to a successful IEP is to have the discipline to keep it up to date. We have to use a database, LitPro, on which to record updated information for reports that are due once a month. This activity takes time and in our facility, the instructors must fill in the monthly information. Therefore, we tend not to keep the student folders as complete as we should. We are attempting to secure another intern form LHU so that we always have two of them available to this program to share some of the workload with us.

After this project began, I received additional responsibilities that took up a great deal of time. Through additional duties being assigned to the former tutor trainer/coordinator, she was no longer able to work with Literacy Corps tutors. So beginning the first of February, I was assigned the additional responsibility of Literacy Corps trainer/coordinator. This added responsibility put a serious constraint on my time. Until only recently, I was given overtime hours in order to handle my workload.

VI. REFLECTION

The impact of the results on this problem is positive. An IEP form that is too long and cumbersome is not good. Instructors must set aside the time to keep the information current in adult learner files. We have not reached a final form as of this writing. It will continue to be refined for a short while longer. As we continue to use the form, ideas surface that we want to try. Not all of them are adopted, but we want to be open to the possibility of new ideas now and then.

Individual Education Plan (Appendix A)

Student Name ______________________________ Age ________

Address: ______________________________

Phone: ______________________ Last year in school ______________

Long-term Goals (personal and educational): Date Achieved:

____

____

____

____

____

Short-term Goals/Needs/Methods (personal and educational): Date Achieved:

____

____

____

____

____

Learning Style: ______________________________

Interests and Preferences:

____

____

____

____

Pre-Test Results:

Date: ______________________ Level: ______________________

Instrument: ______________________

Form: ______________________

Level: ______________________

Sub-Test	Raw Score	Scaled Score	GLE

Ask adult student to describe himself/herself.

Would student like to work with a tutor?

Would student like to work with a college student tutor?

Ask student, "What would cause you to leave program?"

Interviewer Observations:

Tutor Name/Date/Phone (if appropriate):

Contact with student via phone/letter: Date: Comments:

Termination Status/Comments:

Staff: Date:

Goal:

Reading: Materials:

Writing: Materials:

Math: Materials:

Life Skills: Materials:

Individual Education Plan (Appendix B)

Student Name ______________________ Date of 1st Visit __________

Address: ______________________ Phone ( ) __________

Alternate Phone ( ) __________ How often does student plan to attend? __________ Day/Eve

Has your class graduated? Yes___ No___ If no, do you have a High School withdrawal letter? Yes___ No___

Do you have Photo ID Yes___ No___

Long-term Goals (personal and educational): Date Achieved:

Short-term Goals/Needs/Methods (personal and educational): Date Achieved:

Learning Style: __________

Preferences in subject areas

Would student like to work with a tutor? __________ College tutor? __________

Ask student, "What would cause you to leave program?" __________

Interviewer Observations:

Tutor Name/Date/Phone (if appropriate): __________

Contact with student via phone/letter: Date: Comments:

Termination Status/Comments:

Staff: __________ Date: __________

TEST RECORD

PRETESTS

TABE Survey 7/8 E M D A

Date	NC	SS	GE

TABE Battery 7/8 E M D A

Date	NC	SS	GE

TABE Low 7/8 E M D A

Date	NC	SS	GE

POSTESTS

TABE Survey 7/8 E M D A

Date	NC	SS	GE

TABE Battery 7/8 E M D A

Date	NC	SS	GE

TABE Low 7/8 E M D A

Date	NC	SS	GE

PreGED Tests

Form -		Form -		Form -	
Score	Date	Score	Date	Score	Date

GED Tests

Score	Date

Other Tests: Identify below and on back

Reading Goals: Materials/Date:

Writing Goals: Materials/Date:

Math Goals: Materials/Date:

Social Studies Goals: Materials/Date:

Science Goals: Materials/Date:

Life Skills/Goals: Materials/Date:

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Will Parental Incentives Increase Parental Involvement?

Action Researcher's Name:

Barbara Elsleger

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

After observing the lack of parental involvement in children's educational development among my clients, I set out to learn if offering incentives to parents to work with their child/children would increase parental involvement. Working in an ABE/GED parental assistance program with services given through home-visits, I chose nine families to complete a checklist targeting their involvement with their children at home and at school. I also collected field notes of observations I had made during home-visits concerning parents' attitudes toward their child/children education. The results of this checklist and my field note observations were used to determine my baseline for each family. I then offered an incentive to these parents if a total of seven selected parent-child activities I planned to give them were completed on subsequent visits. I explained to these families that they would be eligible to attend a group picnic, the incentive, upon the successful completion of these activity-assignments. The results of offering an incentive to parents to be a participant in this research appeared to be positive from the very beginning of the project.

II. PROBLEM

I see the lack of parental involvement among my clients stemming from a variety of sources. I work as a parent-educator in a rural area where my clientele is isolated from immediate academic and cultural resources. Most of these families must travel at least 15 miles to access even a public library. These families are not new to rural life as generations of their families have lived there before them and they are content with isolation but not aware of its possible harmful effects on their children's lives.

Because I offer my services of parenting, early childhood activities, and ABE/GED in the clients' home, I am able to assess the educational ability of these parents, many of whom function at a low level. I believe they feel inadequate as teachers and don't think they possess the skills necessary to increase their child/children's educational development at home. They view the school as the only source of education and socialization their child/children need.

I also believe that a parent's ignorance or denial of his child's delays has contributed to this issue of a noninvolvement. Some parents simply do not "see" that the child is behind and that he could improve his skills and development with the help of the parent working with him at home before he enters kindergarten. One mother of a 5-year-old boy thought he shouldn't have to be able to identify letters of the alphabet until he was six years old because the child's cousin is six and can't identify all the letters. I gave appropriate materials to this mother to work with her son on a daily basis to introduce the letters of the alphabet to him, but future visits proved that this did not occur. The mother didn't believe that her son was delayed even though he was unable to recognize even two letters..

As a parent-educator, one of my most important goals is to increase parental involvement within our families. Therefore, I feel that any intervention with positive results in this area would be an important factor in proving our parental assistance program successful. The ultimate success of our program, however, lies in helping parents be aware of their role as their child's first and most important teacher and encouraging them to fulfill that roll in order to have children who are successful in school and throughout their lives.

III. PLANNING

After observing so many of my parents who detach themselves from their child/children's educational development, I chose to intervene by having nine consenting families agree to complete parent-child activities that I would give them on each visit for a period of three months. Each of the nine families was to be given seven different activity assignments over this 3-month period. I had planned to see each family twice a month and my time frame allowed one canceled visit by either my client or me. Since I do not usually have a high number of cancellations among my clients and because I was certain that some families would not stay through the end of the project, I felt that this time-frame was sufficient to complete my project with reliable results.

The activities I chose for this project were fairly easy to assure that they could be completed by the next scheduled visit. They were designed to demonstrate to me that both the parent and the child contributed to their completion, and I used this cooperative input of parent and child as one criterion for the success completion of each assignment.

Of course, the most important criterion for measuring success in this project was to observe, during home-visits, if and how the relationship between the parent and child had changed as a result of spending quality time together. I watched to see if the parent revealed enthusiasm for working with his child or if there was indifference to the child but revealed enthusiasm for merely completing the assignment in order to win the incentive of going to the picnic.

Some of the constraints I encountered in preparing this research were in designing the parent-child activities. I realized I could not give all the families the same assignments for they had to be age-related to the child involved, and I had to gear them to the functioning level as well as the baseline of the parent. Activities that included a lot of reading could not be given to two of the families because the parents had low reading skills. I also wanted to design projects that would be "fun" to do for both parent and child, and with each activity I suggested to the parent that he "direct" the activity while the child does the cutting, gluing, drawing, etc.

Along with designing appropriate activities for each family, other problems began to develop. About six weeks into the project, two of the families moved from the area, and another one dropped out of the project due to numerous personal problems. I was now working with six families, but I felt that if I could maintain these six, the research project would still be valid and would answer my query: Will parental incentives increase parental involvement?

IV. ACTION

The incentive I decided upon to offer these families also required a lot of thought on my part. I wanted it to be something that they "wanted" to work for, and yet not make it so elaborate that they would have done the assignments no matter what in order to get the payoff. Throughout this entire project, I was also trying to instill in these parents the desire to continue to work with their children when there would be no extrinsic incentives. I did not think that giving a little "reward" at the end of each assignment was a good idea, because I felt that the results of my research would have been achieved in steps. I wanted to learn if these parents were committed enough to this project to wait for three months to get the incentive that was to be awarded them. That is why I chose to offer them as an incentive, a group picnic, which was to be given for those families who stayed with this research until the end. All of the chosen families liked the idea of attending a group picnic, and consented to the project after hearing about this being the incentive to complete activity-assignments with their child.

I began my project on January 16, 1999. I originally planned to give seven different parent-child activities to nine consenting families, and have my research completed by April 16, 1999. With three of those families eventually leaving the project, I was able to concentrate my efforts on the six that remained.. Of those six, five were families whose baselines revealed little to no parental involvement. If the incentive of offering a picnic increased parental involvement in these five families, I felt that my endeavors in this research would have been worthwhile.

Each family was given an activity to be completed upon our next scheduled visit, which was usually within two weeks. When the activity was shown to me, I praised everyone involved for their work and gave them another one to be finished upon our next visit. I made these projects fairly easy and supplied the parents with all the necessary materials they would need to complete them by the following visit. And, I had to be careful to design them for each family's baseline. Those parents whose checklists and field notes revealed little to no involvement with their child were given activities that required minimal input on their part hoping to alleviate negative attitudes that might arise from an involved activity which might cause them to find reason to quit the project.

The guidelines of designing these parent-child activities to make sure they coincided with each family's baseline, enthusiasm, and functioning level were actually the main constraints of this project that I encountered.

V. RESULTS

As the research continued into February, the second month of the project, the quality of the visits with these families was on the upswing. The parents seemed anxious to show me the activities they had completed with their child. The children, too, were excited to tell me what they did in the activity, and often showed me additional projects they had done. One parent helped her daughter make five paper beaded necklaces instead of the two that I had assigned. She was so proud and delighted with the results that she wanted to make them for her friends.

Through the course of my action research, I encountered numerous positive outcomes. There were only four visit cancellations among my six remaining families, and on rescheduled visits, they wanted the activities they had missed so they could complete them for the next time. No one expressed negative attitudes about doing these parent-child activities, and only one parent questioned me as to whether we were still going to have the picnic.

At the end of this project, I had maintained the six families I had hoped would stay until the project was completed. All six of these families had completed the seven parent-child activities

I had given them, and they had all expressed pride in having done so. I was elated and on the surface, the intervention plan of offering a picnic to these parents to work with their child seemed to be a success. But looking deeper into the research made me wonder just how successful it really was.

Since my goal in doing this research was to increase parental involvement, I often found it difficult to prove that this was taking place. In one family that I was especially interested in during this project, I could not be sure that the activities were completed with the parent or with the help of the parent's sister who also lived in the house. The child, though five years old, is not verbal and could not express who helped her with the assignments.

Also, in several instances, it was difficult to detect if the parent stayed with the child during the activity, or if he simply gave the child directions and left the child to do the assignments by himself.

Nevertheless, because all seven of the parent-child activities were completed by the six families for this project, I can only assume and hope that parental involvement did increase with the help of an incentive. I believe that because these families live in isolated areas and don't venture far from their homes, they saw the picnic worth working for.

VI. REFLECTION

If I were to repeat this research project with different families, I would incorporate some changes that might support the parents confidence that they are capable of increasing their children's development at home and at school. I would have the parent begin the parent/child activity assignments during the home-visit to show me how a parent involves himself in an activity, and how well he can "direct" his child in order to increase development. I believe that I would also give the parents an opportunity or "assignment" of designing activities themselves so that they could realize how little effort it takes to help a child learn.

As I stated earlier in this paper, one of my main goals of this project was to ascertain if parental involvement occurs when there is no incentive to "work" for. A future project for action research would be to learn if the parents in this study continue to do activities with their child without the benefit of an incentive.

I found this research to be fun for the families involved and enlightening to me as a parent-educator. I learned that parental involvement can be increased through an incentive as simple as a picnic, and I resigned myself to believe that it doesn't really matter if a Mother or her sister engages herself with a child's developmental learning so long as it takes place. I felt that my intervention was successful for this project which lasted for only three months, but the genuine incentive for increasing parental involvement in any family must come from parents who see themselves as their child's first teacher and work with them to cultivate a foundation of learning that will last a lifetime.

The time frame of this project allowed me to hold the picnic for the participating families and to include the results in my paper. The weather prevented us from being outside, so we gathered in a local church basement filled with toys and playground equipment. Five of the six final families attended and, in spite of being indoors, the atmosphere was happy and celebrating. Through observations and random conversations, I could detect a feeling of pride among the parents for having somehow "earned" the picnic. They seemed to feel special because of achievement.

Towards the end of the event I awarded each parent with a certificate of accomplishment and reminded them that this should not be the end of doing fun and educational activities with their child, but just a stepping stone to continued involvement that will enhance their child's happiness and success in school which would give cause for genuine celebration.

APPENDIX

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the Action Research Project conducted by __________________________this year. I understand that my identification will remain anonymous, although data may be used in the final report.

PRINT NAME____

SIGN NAME____

DATE___________________________

COMMUNITY
ACTION SOUTHWEST

Family Action Network
Life Skills Checklist

Name:____

Date:____

Place a check in the column next to the skills you wish to achieve during your participation in the Washington Family Action Network program. As you achieve these goals, your instructor will record the date in the right column.

A. Personal

__________ Read greeting cards __________
__________ Write greeting cards __________
__________ Read personal letters __________
__________ Write personal letters __________
__________ Read notes from school __________
__________ Read to child __________
__________ Help child with homework __________
__________ Solve crossword puzzles __________
__________ Keep a journal / diary __________
__________ Other__________________ __________

B. Food and Shopping

__________ Read menus __________
__________ Read recipes __________
__________ Write shopping lists __________
__________ Write recipes __________
__________ Read instructions / labels __________

C. Using References

__________ Find numbers in the phone book __________
__________ Read information in the yellow pages __________
__________ Read newspaper / magazines __________
__________ Other__________________ __________

D. Financial

__________ Read bills __________
__________ Open a checking account __________
__________ Write Checks __________
__________ Balance checkbook statement __________
__________ Open a savings account __________
__________ Discover investment opportunities (I.R.A., C.D., T.D.A.) __________

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Washington County: 315 East Hallam Avenue Washington, PA 15301-3407 Phone (412) 225-9550 Fax (412) 228-9966
Greene County: 22 West High Street Waynesburg, PA 15370-1324 Phone (412) 852-2893 Fax (412) 627-7713

________	Develop a monthly budget	________
________	Complete loan application	________
________	Apply loan application	________
________	Apply for cash assistance	________
________	Other________	________

E. Health

________	Read prescriptions	________
________	Read labels in drugstores	________
________	Apply for Medicare	________
________	Apply for Medical Assistance	________
________	Apply for other health insurance	________
________	Fill out insurance forms	________
________	Other________	________

F. Civic and Legal Activities

________	Apply for driver's license	________
________	Take driver's test	________
________	Register to vote	________
________	Read ballot and vote	________
________	Read lease and rental contracts	________
________	Other________	________

G. Use of Library

________	Apply for library card	________
________	Check out AV materials	________
________	Use reference materials	________
________	Other________	________

H. Community Organizations

________	Participate in local PTA	________
________	Participate in scouts	________
________	Participate in local fireman auxiliary	________
________	Participate in neighborhood watch	________
________	Attend local township meeting	________
________	Attend school board meeting	________
________	Other________	________

I. Transportation

________	Read bus / airline schedule	________
________	Read travel guides and maps	________
________	Read accident reports	________
________	Read car lease agreement	________
________	Other________	________

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Name: ______________________________ Date: ______________

Before Family Development Program

On the scale below, mark the box that would indicate how often you did each activity before you enrolled in Family Development. (upon enrollment and every September)

ACTIVITY	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not very often	Not at all
I DO READING ACTIVITIES WITH MY CHILD.					
I read to my child.					
My child reads to me.					
I take my child to the Library.					
My child reads for fun.					
I VOLUNTEER IN MY CHILD"S SCHOOL.					
I volunteer in my child's classroom.					
I volunteer in my child's school Library.					
I volunteer for other school activities.					
I KNOW HOW MY CHILD DOES IN SCHOOL.					
attend school conferences.					
ask for meetings with teachers.					
talk to my child about school.					
I DO THINGS AT HOME THAT WILL HELP MY CHILD DO WELL IN SCHOOL					
praise and encourage my child.					
use positive methods to control my child.					
help my child do things that will develop his /her mind and body.					
choose activities that match my child's age.					

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION
able
PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Contacting Students to Raise Retention Rates

Action Researcher's Name:

Lydia Frankenburger

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

The Clinton County Development Center for Adults conducted a research project to find out why there is a low retention rate for adult students at the GED Prep level enrolled in our GED programs. The project involved contacting students who attended class at least one time from July 1, 1998 through January 31, 1999 and have not met their goals and have not returned to class to try to encourage them to return to the program. The first contact was a telephone call in which a short interview was conducted; the attempted telephone contact was repeated up to three times. If no contact was made after the third attempt, a letter was sent to the student. The telephone calls and letters were made or sent from December 15, 1998 through March 31, 1999. The project would be considered a success if 10% of the students contacted returned to class by April 1, 1999. Also, improvements may be made to the program from the interview responses.

II. PROBLEM

The Clinton County Development Center for Adults conducts ABE/GED classes in three rural locations in Clinton County. Two sites are community based; one site is at the county prison. This research project focused on learners in the two community based sights located in Lock Haven and a small site in Renovo. The Development Center serves ESL, Beginning Literacy, Beginning ABE, Intermediate ABE, GED Prep, and Adult Secondary students. The students range in age from 17 years old to 55 years old. Students participate in small class activities, one on one instruction, volunteer tutor assistance, self-directed assignments, and computer based lessons. Class size varies from week to week from around three students to twelve students. All classes are open entry-open exit.

The problem is that several participants quit attending class without any indication that they were not coming back. They did not give any reason for not continuing with the program, so it is had to make improvements to keep retention up. If the problem of retention was solved, our program would be able to help more people meet their goals and we would be able to keep numbers up in the classes.

III. PLANNING

A. Intervention:

LitPro will be used to check attendance records for the classes to see who is not attending class, who is at the GED Prep level, and to get phone numbers and addresses of those students who need to be contacted. A contact sheet (Appendix A) will be developed to ask uniform questions to the students contacted. Telephone contacts will be made; up to three-attempted phone calls will be made to each student. If a student is not contacted after three attempts, a letter (Appendix B) will be sent to that student requesting he/she return to class.

All information from the contact sheets will be analyzed and recorded. On April 1, 1999 attendance records on LitPro will be checked to see whom, if anyone returned to class. The people who returned to class will be recorded and their contact sheets will be checked to see the reasons they had not been attending.

B. Time frame:

The time frame of the project will be Mid-December 1998-April 1, 1999. Analyzing the data will take two weeks longer (April 15, 1999).

C. Materials:

Telephone- to call students

LitPro Data Base- to check attendance and get student records

Computer- for data base and typing form (Appendix A) and letters to students (Appendix B)

Pens and paper- to record data

D. Data collecting strategies:

The data collection strategies to be used are interviews, data analysis, and journal keeping.

E. Baseline:

Students who attended class at least one time from July 1, 1998 through January 31, 1999 who no longer attend class and have not met their goals.

F. Criteria for success:

The goal of this project is to get students to return to ABE/GED class. A success rate will be if at least 10% of the students contacted return to class at least one time.

G. Constraints:

Students may have moved, changed phone numbers, or are not willing to speak about the program.

H. Problem statement:

Will telephone or mail contacts to GED Prep level students, who are no longer attending the ABE/GED program help bring back 10% of the contacted students to the program?

IV. ACTION

A. Steps of the intervention:

LitPro was used to check attendance records for the classes to see who was not attending class, who was at the GED Prep level, and to get phone numbers and addresses of those students who needed to be contacted. A contact sheet (Appendix A) was developed to ask uniform questions to the students contacted. Telephone contacts were made; up to three-attempted phone calls were made to each student. If a student was not contacted after three attempts, a letter (Appendix B) was sent to that student requesting he/she return to class. During the project, forty people were called and two letters were mailed.

On April 7, 1999 attendance records on LitPro were checked to see whom, if anyone returned to class in the allocated time period (Mid-December, 1998 - April 1, 1999). The number returning to class at least one time was ten. The people who returned to class were recorded and their contact sheets were checked to see the reasons they had not been attending. All information from the contact sheets and attendance records were analyzed and recorded (see Appendix C for the list of reasons people quit attending class).

B. Time line:

The time line for this projected started Mid-December, 1998 and ran through April 15, 1999. This is when the data analysis was completed.

C. Materials:

Telephone- to call students

LitPro Data Base- to check attendance and get student records

Computer- for data base and typing form (Appendix A) and letters to students (Appendix B)

Pens and paper- to record data

D. Constraints:

Some students moved and changed phone numbers. A couple of students were not cooperative speaking about the program; they just did not want to be bothered. One student was incarcerated. Time was a constraint; it was not always easy to have a time slot available to make telephone calls.

V. RESULTS

The result of this Action Research project is positive. The goal of the project was to get 10% of the students contacted to return to class at least one time. Forty students were contacted and ten returned to class at least once for a 25% return rate.

VI. REFLECTION

The Development Center for Adults in Lock Haven will continue to contact students who no longer attend class without giving any notice. The positive results show that it is worth continuing to help with retention. Contacting students though telephone calls and/or letters does help raise the retention rate in ABE/GED classes.

Appendix A

Student Contact Form

Name: ____________________ Phone: (H) ____________

Site: ____________________ (W) ____________

Level: ____________________

Contact Attempts: (Try to speak personally)

Date: ________ Time: ________

Date: ________ Time: ________

Date: ________ Time: ________

Best Time to Call: ____________

Say something to this effect, "We haven't seen you in a while. Please consider picking back up with the GED program." Also remind the student of the times of the classes.

Continued on next page

Question #1: Please give reasons why you stopped attending GED classes.

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________
4. ______________________________
5. ______________________________

Question #2: What could the DCA do or change to help you meet your goal?

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________
4. ______________________________
5. ______________________________

What date do you anticipate returning to GED classes?

____

Date of first return: ______________________________

Appendix B

Date

Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear **name**:

We miss you at GED/Brush-up class! We have not seen you lately and would like to know how you are doing. Is there anything we can do to help you achieve your goal?

For your information, The Development Center for Adults holds classes on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00 AM-11:30 AM and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:00 PM-8:30 PM in Lock Haven. A class is also held at the Renovo Library on Thursdays at 2:00 PM-4:30 PM.

Call us anytime if you need any information or would like to speak with one of us.

We hope to see you soon.

Sincerely,

Instructors' names
Instructors

Appendix C

List of reasons people quit attending ABE/GED classes.

An asterisk (*) beside the reason indicates if the person returned to class after giving that reason for not attending class.

Heath problems

Rehabilitation *

Passed test ** (returned for brush-up)

Incarcerated

Home problems

Attending another program

Death in family

No driver's license *

Tutor wanted

Too busy *

No babysitter*

Moved

Holidays

Newly employed **

Car problems *

No motivation

Family emergency

No particular reason *

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Post-Test Learner Evaluation

Action Researcher's Name:

Sydney Schwartz Hardiman

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

The Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council is an adult basic education program which teaches ABE, GED and English as a second language to adults 18 and over. As each student enters our program they are tested individually and their goals are discussed at length. The students are then matched with a volunteer tutor to work on their educational goals. All students are re-tested after 30 to 50 hours of tutoring. At the post-test they are asked a series of questions regarding their goals and their tutoring experience.

This project was to change the questions on the Post-test Evaluation Form and to use it for a period of five months. The answers on the new form were compared to the answers given on the old form during the same period last year. Then the quality and quantity of the answers were compared.

I was attempting to determine the following:

Will changing the questions on the post-test evaluation sheet, over a four month period, improve the quality and quantity of the student responses regarding completed goals and potential concerns.

My results revealed a greater quality and quantity of answers when the students were asked about their accomplishments and if they now had any new goals. My two other goals, to uncover problems in the tutoring sessions and the students' lives, to prevent student drop out, were not as successful. The questions were not open-ended enough and the students did not reveal tutoring or personal problems to the interviewer.

I believe that while some of the questions on the form are good and can remain, the form will need to be revised a second and possibly a third time with more input from other staff members.

II. PROBLEM

The Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council is a non-profit agency in the field of adult literacy education. This includes, adult basic education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), English as a second language (ESL), family literacy, and workplace literacy. GPLC has a paid professional staff of approximately 30 people. GPLC services all of Allegheny County, with one main office in East Liberty and 8 area offices throughout Allegheny County. The area offices are staffed by one person (Area Coordinator) and serve a specific territory which is broken down by zip codes. I serve the territory of North-West Pittsburgh which covers the broad area of the North Side, downtown Pittsburgh, the airport area and the west side of Pittsburgh.

With the exception of the workplace and family literacy programs, 90% of the adult students who enter GPLC's program are tutored by adult volunteers. The remaining 10% are tutored in small classes or by paid staff. Prior to tutoring, each volunteer must attend a 12 hour tutor training and each student must attend a 1 1/2 hour orientation and an individual evaluation.

As an area coordinator it is my role to deal with all the volunteers and students who live or want to tutor in the territories I cover. I pre- and post-test the students, interview tutors, and make tutor I student matches. I also handle all the paper work and problems associated with this, while providing ongoing support the tutors and students. By working in the community I serve I can meet with tutors and students and be easily accessible to them.

All students entering the GPLC program are evaluated individually with a mix of formal and informal testing. Students are then reevaluated after 30 to 50 hours of tutoring. At each post-test students are asked a short series of questions about changes in their reading and it's effect on their home and work lives, their tutoring sessions and their goals. The problem is in the questions themselves. GPLC is in need of better information on the impact of our program on students lives and if the students are accomplishing their goals. We also want to uncover any problems in the tutoring sessions themselves and improve future sessions. The evaluation form as it is currently written is not eliciting the needed responses from the students.

As an area coordinator it is my job to complete state forms on all students. On those forms we want to be able to report goals the students have and are achieving. Student retention is also an ongoing problem. We want to retain students until they student accomplish their stated goals. My goal with this project was to improve GPLC's program and my practice by discovering what students have accomplished and what goals they have competed. We would hopefully impact retention by finding out if there are problems in the tutoring sessions which we could address and correct. I also hoped to improve student retention by identifying a personal problem before it causes the student to drop.out of the program. We then hoped to be able to help the student find the appropriate solution. Lastly I hoped in the long run to improve the state forms by reporting more completed student goals.

III. PLANNING

My intervention was to create a new, one-page, post-test evaluation sheet. I then asked three other Area Coordinators to use this form in place of their old post-test evaluation form during every post-test they did in a five month period. I too used this form in my own area. The project ran from November 1, 1998 to March 31, 1999.

The only materials required were the new form and an evaluation of the form at the end of the five months. The data was collected by having each coordinator give me copies of all completed forms during the five months. The completed forms were then compared to the post-test evaluation forms which had been completed during the same five months last year. In other words, I compared the answers on the new post-test evaluation form, from November 1, 1998 to March 31, 1999 to the answers on the old post-test evaluation form from November 1, 1997 to March 31, 1998.

Approval was needed from the agency Program Manager who is my direct supervisor and it was received. The only constraints to the project was a concern that not enough post-tests were completed in this five month period to truly evaluate the form, but twenty-seven forms were completed during this time which gave a solid basis for analysis.

The project was to be considered a success if the answers received from the students on the evaluation sheet are longer, more in depth and reveal more information about their achievements and completed goals, their future goals and their problems with their tutors and any obstacles preventing them from completing our program.

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT IS:

Will changing the questions on the post-test evaluation sheet over a four month period, improve the quality and quantity of student responses regarding competed goals and potential concerns.

IV. ACTION

To complete this project I first consulted with a number of other area coordinators to obtain their input on what types of questions they felt the form should have. I then took those suggestions and created a new Post-Test Evaluation Form (Appendix II) to replace the old Post-test Evaluation Form (Appendix I).

I then approached four area coordinators with large areas and asked them to use the form beginning on November 1, 1998 and ending on March 31, 1999. The form was to be used during every post-test given during this time.

Out of the ten area coordinators in the program I choose three and myself to implement the project. I picked these areas for several reasons. First, they were some of the largest territories and consequently were doing a number of post-tests. Secondly, the coordinators themselves, rather than volunteers were giving the majority of the post-tests for their area, which I felt would maintain consistency in the project. And lastly, these coordinators tended to be thorough in their approach to testing and could be relied upon to complete the form each time.

When the project began I was working in an office in the West End and handling only that territory. I had asked the areas of McKeesport/Mon Valley, East Liberty and North Side to work with this form. In December of 1998, the North Side Coordinator was promoted and GPLC combined the West End and the North Side into one office. That meant that although there would be no fewer post-tests given there would be one less objective person to evaluate the form at the end of the project. Consequently, when the project ended in March I had only two people to evaluate the form. It was suggested by the PAARN facilitator that the other people who had seen this form would be GPLC's Reading Specialist and Education Specialist. I then asked them both to review the form based on the testing materials they had looked at and their familiarity with the old post-test form. This provided two more opinions on the form and another perspective on it.

V. RESULTS

In reviewing the success of the new Post-Test Evaluation form I looked at four different areas. In two of these areas I was able to directly compare the old Post-Test Evaluation data to the new form and obtain hard data and actual percentages. Of the other two areas reviewed, the comparison of one area was fairly objective and the other area had no direct comparison on the old form.

The first area reviewed was student goal achievement. I was hoping the new form would elicit more student accomplishments. The old form addressed this area with three different questions. They were, "In what ways do you think your reading has changed since you started with your tutor?", "Have you reached any of your own personal reading goals? Please explain and be specific as you can." and "Are your lessons with your tutor benefiting you an a day to day basis either at home or on your job? Please explain."

I felt the biggest problems with these questions began with the word "reading". Although GPLC is a literacy program, when students are pre-tested they are asked to choose a multitude of goals, a large number of which address things other than reading. Consequently, if a student is working on just math and is asked about his/her reading their answer would be, "it hasn't". I wanted the new form to not only be more generalized in asking about goal achievement, but I wanted to force the student to give a specific example both in their tutoring session and outside of it. To address this I created the two questions, "Tell me about something you did in your lessons which made you proud or happy." "Tell me about something you did at home, work or in a social situation which you could not do before your lessons started."

In my research I uncovered 26 completed Post-Test Evaluation forms from November 1, 1997 to March 31, 1998. During the course of the project 20 new post-test evaluation forms were completed. To evaluate both the number of answers to the questions and the quality of the answers, I created a chart which evaluated those questions which addressed goal achievement. In one column I listed the accomplished goals from the old Post-Test Evaluation form and in the second column I listed those from the new Post-Test Evaluation form.

My initial evaluation of the forms compared the number of students who mentioned goal achievement. The evaluation of the base line forms revealed that four people indicated no goal achievements and 22 people had some sort of achievement, a percentage of 84%. On the new form only two people listed no goal achievement and 18 had achieved a short term goal, a percentage of 90%. While not huge, this was a fairly significant increase.

Many of the students on both forms noted more than one accomplishment. So I compared the total number of goals achieved on both forms and discovered that on the old form there were 35 separate goals mentioned. On the new form there were 33. This translates into a 30% higher rate of accomplished goals mentioned on the new Post-Test Evaluation form.

The questions on both the old Post-Test Evaluation form and the new were open-ended, but I believe the new form forced the student to think about at least one specific event which was positive.

For example on the old form several of the answers were, "Improvement. Staff is very supportive of her learning goals." "Reading better - more confidence." "I understand that there are different ways to organize information." and, "Came a long way. Starting to understand what she is reading."

Sample answers on the new form were, "Doing [writing] reports at work. Is more detailed with those reports." "I read better to my grandchildren." "Using scrap paper and pen at the grocery store instead of a calculator."

The next area I evaluated was a comparison of the change in student goals. On both forms we asked the students if they had any change in goals. On the old form the question which addressed this was, "Have your goals changed since you entered our program? If so how?" On the new form I changed this question to read, "When you began our program you said you wanted to ____________. Are you still working towards that goal or has it changed." I then added two other questions to determine what, if any, the new long term and short term goals were (Appendix II see Question 3a. 3b.).

This area of the form showed the greatest improvement. On the old Post-Test Evaluation form, 21 out of the 26 students indicated no change in their goals. Four of them indicated a change, but the change was just more of what they were already working on or was very vague. For example, "Yes, wants to do more writing and more reading." "No longer interested in .." "Feels better about herself Wants to be able to read and write better."

On the new Evaluation form there were 8 students who indicated no change in their goals and eleven who noted a new goal. This was a fairly significant number and showed that the old question was not eliciting enough response from the students to determine if we were still meeting their needs. The new goals mentioned were also much more specific. They included, "I want to learn more about the internet and open a web page." "Probably get a job." "Check writing." "Learn to write better."

The next section of the form evaluated was the Tutoring Section (Appendix II, #1-6 under subheading Tutoring). This section was created to determine if the students were happy with their tutor and the time and place of their tutoring. There was no specific question which addressed this on the old form, but there was the question, "Are there things you would like to work on that aren't being covered in your sessions?" which was designed somewhat to see if the tutors were meeting the students needs. The comparison of these two questions was objective. In actuality the question on the old form elicited longer responses from the students and some specific things they would like to work on further, "driver's license" "more spelling" "check writing", but did not really uncover if the tutor was not meeting the students needs.

The questions on the new form more specifically addressed the student's happiness with their tutor and tutoring sessions, unfortunately these questions did not achieve the desired result. Of the six questions all but number 3, "What are you doing in your lessons that is helping you achieve your goal?", elicited only yes answers from the students. The questions were obviously not open ended enough and this was revealed also by the people who evaluated the form. One evaluator indicated "It sounds like you're 'checking up' on the tutor. I'm not sure I'd want to say anything negative. I'd probably answer yes, even though my answer might really be no."

Other than a number of students who answered the questions with an enthusiastic "Oh yes!" in response to their happiness with their tutor I feel the evaluator was quite correct in her assessment. In all questions other than number 3 the answers were simply "yes" with no more than one or two of the 20 students elaborating on that. Yet again, only one of the twenty students had a negative comment in answer to all 6 of the questions, and that was in response to a change in the hours of the meeting facility, "Millie was, [happy] but is not happy with the Glen Hazel Reading Room's new time."

The final section of this form evaluated was "GPLC Program" (Appendix II questions 1-3 under GPLC Program). There was nothing similar to this on the old Post-Test Evaluation form. My goal here was to determine if the students had some outside issues interfering in their tutoring for which we could provide intervention or a social service referral. Upon evaluation, it appeared that these questions were also not open-ended enough and I'm not sure the students completely understood the nature of the first question, "Is this tutoring what you thought it would be? Please explain".

Seventeen out of twenty of the answers to this questions were, "yes" or "better" [than they thought]. The second and third questions more directly addresses student life problems and asked if we could intervene. The questions were, "Are there any obstacles in your life that will prevent you from achieving your goal? If yes, what are then?" and "How can GPLC help you overcome those obstacles." In answer to the first question 16 of the 20 students said "No". Only one of twenty students noted a problem that was able to be addressed. This student was having babysitting problems and the area coordinator called the student's caseworker. The other four seemed to feel it was their burden to fix their own problems even though they did not have the knowledge of how to do that, "I don't know." was one response.

I think the evaluators of these forms said it best when they wrote, "Would you tell a stranger about personal problems in your life?" and "Most students answered no -- as if to say retention I attendance problem's that they'd possibly had were their own doing or responsibility."

VI. REFLECTION

Upon reflection I believe this form was in need of a real change and several of the changes made showed a solid improvement over the old form. On the other hand a number of the questions I thought were open-ended turned out not to be. These should either be changed or eliminated from the form.

The goals portion of the form showed good results when looking at student goal achievement and a change in student goals. I would want to keep these questions, although the comments by the Reading and Education Specialist that all the questions should, "follow a 'conversational context"' and "ask it in a conversational manner" may be worth considering.

I agreed with the evaluators that the questions about the time and place of tutoring and the quality of the tutoring were too easy to answer yes and no. I think we should continue to explore ways to uncover tutoring problems, but these questions will have to be more open-ended and less direct, less like we are "checking up" on the tutor.

Finally the GPLC program questions regarding life obstacles to tutoring need to be changed. We want to be able to provide intervention to students who are in danger of dropping out of the program, but these questions are not allowing the students to open up to the evaluator. Perhaps a more conversational opening such as "Tell me what's going on in your life." would work better here.

All the evaluators also indicated that although the form was only one page. it was too long. I would look at shortening it.

I do intend to revise this form again based on the results of this project. I would like to get more Area Coordinator input on the new form and try it out for several months again. I could do a second cycle of research on the newly revised form, but I think we have enough data from this project to complete it.

In reviewing this form I began to consider all the forms and the large amount of paper being used in all Area Coordinator offices. A potential new project could be to look at the paper flow in our offices and the necessity of many of the forms we use. Do we still need them, and if yes, should they be updated and revised.

EVALUATION SHEET

(The interviewer should complete this form for the student)

1. In what ways do you think your reading has changed since you started with your tutor?

2a. Have you reached any of your own personal reading goals? Please explain and be as specific as you can.

2b. Have your goals changed since you entered our program? If so, how?

3. Are your lessons with your tutor benefiting you on a day to day basis either at home or on your job? Please explain.

4. Are there things you would like to work on that aren't being covered in your sessions?

APPENDIX II

Post-Test Evaluation Sheet

(The interviewer should complete the form for the student)

Student Name:______________________________ **Date:**______________

Interviewer:_________________________________

Goals

1. Tell me about something you did in your lessons which made you proud or happy.

2. Tell me about something you did at home, work or in a social situation which you could not do before your lessons started.

3. When you began our program you said you wanted to ______________________. Are you still working towards that goal or has it changed?

    3a. If it has changed what do you want to achieve now?

    3b. What new achievements do you want to reach?

4. Is there anything else you feel you have achieved as a result of your tutoring?

Tutoring

1. Are you happy with the time and place of your tutoring?

2. Does your tutor show up on time and/or call if she/he has to cancel? Are missed sessions rescheduled?

3. What are you doing in your lessons that is helping you achieve your goal?

4. Does your tutor give you clear directions and ask you questions?

5. Do you feel comfortable asking your tutor questions?

    5a. Do you understand the answers?

6. Do you tell your tutor when you don't understand a lesson?

GPLC Program

1. Is this tutoring what you thought it would be? Please explain

2. Are there any obstacles in your life that will prevent you from achieving your goal? If yes, what are they?

3. How can GPLC help you overcome those obstacles?

APPENDIX III

Evaluation of the Post-Test Evaluation Sheet

Please answer the following questions as completely as possible.

The goal of the New Post-Test Evaluation Sheet was three-fold:
The first was to uncover student accomplishments and completed short and long term goals.
The second was to uncover any student problems which are occurring in the tutoring.
The third was to uncover any problems in the students' personal life which could affect their future tutoring.

Goals

1. By using this form were you able to uncover any goals the students had completed which you were previously unaware of? Please explain or give an example.

____

____

2. Did you discover that some student's goals had changed from the pre-test or previous post-test? Were you aware of these changes prior to using this form?

____

____

Tutoring:

1. By using this form were you able to uncover any problems in the tutoring situation which you were previously unaware of? Please explain or give an example.

____

____

GPLC Program

1. By using this form, did you discover if students thought the tutoring was not what they expected? If yes, were they happy or upset about this? Please explain or give an example.

____

____

2. By using this form did you uncover any obstacles in the student's lives which would affect their tutoring? If no, was it because the students had no problems or because they were unwilling to reveal problems? If yes, were you able to help that student? Please explain.

____

____

The Form

* *I have attached a blank form to this evaluation sheet. Please feel free to write directly on it.*

1. What did you like best about this form?

____

____

2. What changes would you make?

____

____

3. Do you feel it accomplished any of three stated goals?

____

____

4. If no, what did it not accomplish? If yes, what did it accomplish?

____

____

5. Is there any other goal you would like to see this form accomplish? What is it?

____

____

6. Did you feel the form was too long? Too short? Did it take up too much time?

____

____

7. Any other comments:

____

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION
able
PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Teaching Short-Term and Long-Term Goal-Setting to ESL Students for Educational, Personal, and Career Application

Action Researcher's Name:

Shirley F. Jackson

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Pennsylvania Action Research Monograph

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940”s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

An ongoing problem I observed in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom evolved from the intake form of Lancaster-Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 Adult Education. (Appendix A) On the form is the question: "What is your educational/personal goal?" Invariably, potential students give a stock answer: "To learn better English." If the instructor did not do the intake form of a particular student, this information is too general. It was also a comment about this question that I heard at workshops, conferences, and observed on the Internet that led me to consider the question more closely.

As I observed my students, I felt they did have personal objectives and goals. Many of the Advanced and Intermediate students could tell me what these goals were. What I discovered, through conversation with them, is they did not have short-term and long-term learning goals. They also did not seem to process how learning one procedure would enable them to learn yet another more advanced procedure. Since I had been a student of individual learning styles I decided to incorporate how a student studies and what way a student likes to study in a Planning Questionnaire. (Appendix B) As a first step in gathering information and to help students feel at ease for the major part of the project I explained what the project was going to be and asked for their assistance. I had a very willing group. Individually, I went over each form with the student so that there would be no difficulty in understanding the ranking or the % rating systems. Students appeared to approve of the purpose of the first form. Students also said no voluntary participation form was necessary since they were interested in the project for their own knowledge and I would use no names.

My original concern - why students were studying English- remained the foremost focus so I continued with the project. I broke it into small sessions over a six-week initial period.

II. PROBLEM

This class could be deemed multi-level with students testing on the Best test as Advanced or Intermediate. There were no Beginner Level students in this class. At the time this study began, the majority of the students were males, but the class mixture was a blend of Hispanic, Asian, and Middle Eastern with no one dominant group.

With the class's cooperation we set up personal interview sessions; journal keeping as reflected in Forms A-B-C-D (Appendices C, D, E, F); and question and answer sessions. The students were enthusiastic and cooperative. I should mention that the students also reflected an economic difference. What impact that had, I will refer to later in the monogram.

For the most part, my students in English work on areas they feel they need such as reading, writing, and speaking English. However, they forgot about listening skills. It was decided, as a group, we would get everyone on one task and to initiate an understanding of goal setting by doing a model. Each student had to be responsible enough and comfortable enough to say "I don't understand you." We had to do this procedure slowly and politely because of our different cultural backgrounds.

At first, we began with writing our short-term personal goals since these students had already indicated they had these goals. What surprised me in this research is that students had long-term personal goals, i.e., to speak, write, read, and understand English well enough to go to college; but they did not bother with planning the short-term goals that would help them reach the long-term goal. Once we began to sketch these in step-by-step and once we kept a journal, the students understood what they needed to do. Some students grasped the concept immediately; others took a few weeks. Eventually, we understood each other. Now the goals could be applied to "learning "English.

III. PLANNING

A. Problem Defined

My initial concern was to develop a student's ability to set a goal for learning that aspect of English that would most benefit the individual whether it was speaking, listening, writing, reading, learning idioms, or studying vocabulary. I also wanted to maximize class time. I found I was meeting with students before and after class to clarify', to define strategies, to recommend materials. This procedure worked well and kept me on task and focused with each student. At the time I began the project there were ten students.

B. Significance of the problems in the field of ESL

The ability to know future goals and to develop a plan of operation is important to all adults. It is especially important to immigrants and peoples of other races so their jobs do not remain the low- level stagnant jobs that can damage the spirit. I wanted ESL students to progress, enhance self- esteem, and gain confidence.

My perception is that students who write well; who can speak to a mixed group of language users and be understood; who can laugh at their mistakes without feeling inferior are citizens who will be a success in life.

C. Intervention

1. The first step of intervention was a learning process for me but was a result of the forms developed in Appendices C-D-E-F. The Planning Questionnaire (Appendix B) was developed first and eventually affected how I taught these adults. Because students may enter and exit this class at their convenience, we defined short-term as a daily to weekly situation. Long -term meant anything more than three weeks.

2. The English goal the students wanted to try first was listening to spoken English. (Please note that these students spoke well enough to be understood, but with more accented English than they wished.) Through our discussions about their questionnaire, it was felt we should try tapes, teacher, and fellow students. Since the class had been requesting I read the same thing another student had read, I realized pronunciation was important. This was an area of study we emphasized. Students were advised to write reactions in their journals. They frequently indicated, "too fast," when they listened to a tape and filled in blank spaces with words. Sometimes it was "too soft." Where a word was missed and they could not fill in the blank, the students wrote "unclear." Sometimes they relied on each other to obtain the words for the blanks. They found this unsatisfactory because they would then miss the next word. (Appendix G) Without realizing what was occurring, they began to change their responses and this was more positive. Students began to say, "I tried," "I did it," "Jon helped by reading slowly."

3. Another step we used was how planning could be done as homework if we chose a story or paragraph or a news article and practiced at home. Students could then individualize a goal and evaluate how effective it was. This was not totally successful because of attendance. Some students were working shifts, which meant one week they could be in class, but the following week they were working. There was then no feedback except in journal entries. No demonstrations came from the working group on a consistent basis.

4. Another aspect of the intervention was the personal interview after a unit, i.e., the listening unit, had been completed. In this type of interview, usually 15 minutes, the student input

was critical because the student was not only evaluating the education goal of self, but also the classroom goal and the teaching goal. In fact, this became extremely valuable and obviously important to the student because the student considered the time to talk such a priority that work time would have been forfeit. Fortunately, we could schedule time either before or after class and maintained the personal interview as a major source of sharing.

D. Baseline

The baseline was a combination of the discussion/personal interview and the self-assessment form. By the time students had spent over six weeks in assessing their educational goals and filling out forms; keeping a personal journal; and discussing goals with the teacher; they had processed the procedures for setting short-term and long-term goals. They could not seem to mesh educational and personal goals in the beginning forms, but, as they worked on specific goals, they began to see the relationship and significance. Their independence in filling out their forms and specifics in telling the instructor what they needed to learn in English was to be the success.

IV. ACTION

A. Data Collection Methods

Data was collected through pre- and post-questionnaires, personal interviews, application of listening skills, student journal entries, and final preparation of a plan in answer to the question: "What is your educational/personal goal?"

B. Data Collected

The data yielded the following results: in the Planning Questionnaire (both before and after the intervention), students were willing to indicate rankings and percentages, but in the post-questionnaire a few students wrote qualifiers or comments. For example, in listening skills the student now wants someone who pronounces words well. Once objectives and goals had been explained, more students could write goals precisely. They even included reviews as part of the goals. All of these students (100%) felt comfortable about goal setting after teaching, demonstrating, and conferencing were learned. However, many were still hesitant to say the long-term goal would be done. For example, the young student who wants to attend college also has family responsibility hence does not foresee an easy path to his goal. All this tells me is we must be available for different types of intervention such as teaching about scholarships, grants, etc.

V. EVALUATION/REFLECTION

The intervention was a success. In addition to their ability in organizing their goals, I noticed increased confidence in my students. They introduced new students who entered the class later into the pattern of goal setting. However, some students also taught the instructor something. Not all goals are the same. Some students asked me if their goals differed from mine for them, could they learn what they needed or wanted. In reality, they were preparing their own individual educational plan.

One of the biggest problems I had was attendance fluctuation. As referred to earlier in the paper I also had an economic difference wherein some students were in the United States to learn computers while others were struggling at low-level entrance jobs in spite of the fact that they had advanced degrees in their country of origin. This caused minor problems with goal setting because not all could realize their goal as soon as they wanted to do so.

One student had met a long-term goal and was attending college as well as attending class. This student was totally focused and had goals set in place. She used the resources in the community. This was advantageous because that student influenced others in the group. Students who did not need to work also had more time with the goals, and I could see a difference in journal entries and in their weekly forms.

What I would do further, in addition to the methods already employed, would be to tape the personal interviews. Although I had notes, I would rather have had the suggestions and evaluations on tape for reference.

What I observe now is a group of adults who can break events into short-term and long-term goals. They also question what they are studying and of what use it will be to them. I plan to incorporate short-term and long-term goal setting in all my teaching and demonstrate how this is done in personal, educational, and career areas.

REFERENCES

- *Day One Planning Questionnaire* (EFL/ESL) by Nick Miller. Internet via Netscape. No date. Obtained winter 1998. (Permission granted by Nick Miller to use any of the form or modify it. I modified it.)

- Comments from esl@literacy.nifl.gov. regarding developing language learning plans. FinnMiller;oresl@Literacynet. org. SylvanlRainwater;rly-zdo4.mx.aol.com. goal setting. "Goal setting is recognized as one of the four essential elements in enhancing a learner's efficacy in a subject... Goal setting is a component in removing levels of anxiety and phobia and leads to the motivation to achieve, often beyond their levels of expectation." Quoted message from NIFL ESL list serve, Nov. 24, 1998@12:2O P.M.

- PA-ARN: Project #99-80111. July 1997-June 1998 Project Director Dr. Gary Kuhne; Gayle Y. Miles, Instructor. (Forms are similar. They are also similar to many ESL and Learning Styles questionnaires.)

- GRAMMAR: STRATEGIES AND PRACTICE, ADVANCED. Sandra K. Briggs. San Mateo, CA ScottForesman, A Division of HarperCollins Publishers. (The introduction included an explanation of goals and objectives that was used with my students. This is paraphrased to fit these students but definitely from Sandra K. Briggs. See Basis for Definitions.)

STRATEGIES FOR SETTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

Good students set goals and objectives. Goals are what you want to accomplish. Objectives are specific things you want to learn. In order to set goals and objectives, you will need to ask yourself these and other questions.

What about the English language do I already know well? What areas do I need to work on? In looking over the lessons in my book, what do I see that is new? What do I see that I should review? How will I be using the material I learned after I finish this book? Where will I get answers to my questions after I finish this unit?

After you think about these questions, write a personal goal for your study of the English language. For example, in your study of English, your goal could be to feel confident with pronunciation. It could be to be able to edit your written work for correct grammatical usage. Next, identify some specific goals that you want to accomplish. For example, an objective in studying English could be to use idioms in your conversation.

Set up goals and objectives for yourself. Discuss them with a classroom partner. Are your goals and objectives useful, achievable? Make revisions in your objectives, if necessary.

Paraphrased from GRAMMAR: STRATEGIES AND PRACTICE Advanced Sandra J. Briggs, San Mateo, California
ScottForesman, A Division of HarperCollins Publishers

LANCASTER
LEBANON
INTERMEDIATE
UNIT 13

Appendix A

Lancaster Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13
1998-99 Adult Education

Class#/Site:		Contract #s:		Subject(s):	Wr, SS, Sc, L+A, M
				BEST Form:	B / C
Instructor:		Pretest Assessment		Pretest score:	

Please Print

Today's Date: ______________

Name: ______________________________ Social Security #: ______________
Last First

Address: ______________________________________

City: ________________ Zip Code: ________ Phone Number: ______________

School District in which you live: ______________ Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Which of the following groups do you most identify with:
☐ American Indian ☐ Asian ☐ Black ☐ Hispanic ☐ White

Date of birth: ______________
Month/Day/Year

Your age: ________

Household Status: ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Supported by family/friends
☐ Living in a group home ☐ Homeless
How many children do have (under age 18)? _______

Are you working?
☐ Yes - Full/Part-time (circle one)
☐ Unemployed/seeking employment
☐ No, not available for work

Last grade of school: _______

Are you:
☐ Receiving Welfare
☐ Handicapped
☐ Institutionalized
☐ Using a Medical Card
☐ Receiving Food Stamps
☐ An Immigrant
☐ Enrolled in other Federal Programs
☐ SSI
☐ A Displaced Homemaker

How well do you speak/understand English?
☐ Very well
☐ Well
☐ Not well

How did you find out about this program?

____

____

What is your educational/personal goal?

____

____

How long do you plan on studying in our program?

____

____

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In case of emergency, contact:

Name ______________________ Address/Phone ______________________

Submit white copy to office; retain yellow copy for student file

Appendix B

PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE	
Name:	Class:
Address:	Phone:
Rate your answers 0-5, 0 being the lowest.	
WHY DO YOU WANT TO STUDY ENGLISH?	
	0 1 2 3 4 5
To meet foreigners, ie. ESL students	
To work with English speakers	
To study with English speakers	
To travel abroad	
As a hobby	
Other	
WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO STUDY?	
	0 1 2 3 4 5
Conversation	
Grammar	
Listening	
Pronunciation	
Speaking	
Spelling	
Technical terms	
TOEFL	
Vocabulary	
Writing	
HOW DO YOU LIKE TO STUDY?	
	0-25% 25-50% 50-75% 75%-100%
By yourself	
One partner	
Small groups	
Big groups	
With videos	
With cassettes	
With books	
With papers	
With pictures	
With computers	
Listen to teacher	
Listen to students	
Speaking	
Free conversation	
Low structure	
High structure	
Drills	

Appendix B

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR LEVEL?	
High Intermediate Advanced Native Level	
WHAT ARE YOUR HOBBIES?	
WHAT IS YOUR JOB?	
COMMENTS:	

Appendix C

SINGLE GOAL SHORT TERM ACTIVITY RECORD

Form A

Objective (short term)

____

____

Date Activity

Dec. 16 ________________

Dec. 17 ________________

Dec. 21 ________________

Dec. 22 ________________

Dec. 23 ________________

Student: Date:

____

Appendix D

Form B

Write your goal for today's class.

____
____
____
____
____
____

Did you meet your goal? Yes No

If the answer is yes, was it because of something you did or because of something someone else did, such as another student or the instructor?

____
____
____
____

If the answer is no, was it because of something you did or was it because of something someone else did?

____
____
____

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix E

			Form C			
			Short Term			
		Personal		Educational		Career
		Yes No		Yes No		Yes No
I have plans for today.						
I have plans for tomorrow.						
I have plans for the week.						
I have plans for the month.						
			Long Term			
		Personal		Educational		Career
		Yes No		Yes No		Yes No
I have plans for the year.						

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix F

Form D

Planning for the short term would be useful for me because:

Planning for the long term would be useful for me because:

It would be difficult for me to plan in the short term because:

It would be difficult for me to plan in the long term because:

Student: Date:

Appendix G

Listening Skills Exercise

A. Pronunciation of vocabulary led by instructor with students repeating.

B. Pre-reading of the paragraph by the instructor. Group reading when students were comfortable with the reading.

C. Silent reading of the paragraph. Answer pronunciation questions.

D. Another reading of the paragraph by the instructor.

E. Distributing a copy of the paragraph with words missing.

F. Taped reading with a different voice. Students fill in the missing words.

G. Student reading of the paragraph with the words inserted.

H. Evaluation of the listening assignment.

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Using Communication to Retain Tutors

Action Researcher's Name:

Judy Kline

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education, however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

Franklin County Literacy Council has had an ongoing problem of the retention of tutors. Many tutors have not been able to complete their one-year commitment. This study compared retention rates for tutors from 1998 to the present time. A question and response form was developed to determine the reasons for tutor dropout. Results were collected by phone or personal visit. The tutors that responded felt that in the past there had been a lack of contact and communication between the tutor and the program itself. With increased communication tutor retention could improve.

II. PROBLEM

Volunteer tutors are difficult to retain. Therefore, as learning sessions continue, the students are deprived of continuing contact with the same tutor.

Students range in age from seventeen and older, with most of the students being female. Varied socio-economical levels are noted. ABE students range in ability from pre-literate through beginning, intermediate, and those requiring specific ABE training. ESL students range through pre-beginning, beginning and intermediate.

The 13-year-old literacy council has had difficulties in the past, which include funding, adequate staffing, and continuity in support staff

Retention of tutors could positively effect student outcomes because of instructional continuity.

III. PLANNING

The intervention plan was to compare tutors trained in 1998 and those trained in 1999 when tutor communication was increased.

A questionnaire (attached) was utilized to interview tutors from 1998. The tutors were given a list of 21 different responses to the question of "What is/or would be a reason that you did/or would stop tutoring." The responses to the question were obtained by telephone contact and in person by the researcher.

The baseline or criteria for success was set at a high of 70% tutor retention rate, for tutors trained in January/February, 1999.

Constraints against using work-time for this project were more than overcome by volunteer hours to the agency.

Approval for this project was obtained by Barbara Noel, Program Coordinator and also Henry Wardrop, Special Projects Coordinator.

In reviewing the literature it appears that recruitment and retention are used interchangeably. These are clearly related issues, although retention becomes the outcome of recruitment.

In this literacy office it has become evident that retention is affected by communication and contact with the literacy staff

Will the implementation of past tutors suggestions received by survey results increase tutor retention to 70% for the first six weeks of 1999?

IV. ACTION

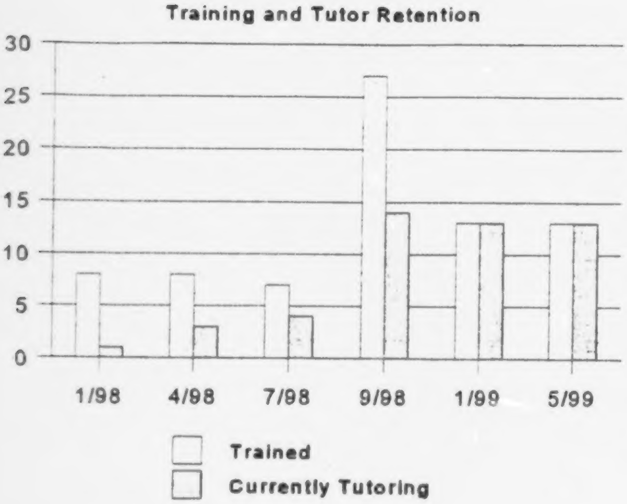
Implementing the intervention was easier than anticipated. As tutors came to the literacy council office or were contacted by phone, the tutors were receptive to responding to the question.

The researcher would verbalize the 21 responses to the tutor, therefore making this instrument user-friendly for the tutor.

Thirty-seven tutors responded to the questionnaire. There were no refusals or constraints, due in part to the familiarity of the tutor with the researcher.

V. RESULTS

Of the thirty-seven tutors that responded, 80% of the tutors responded in a positive way to questions #5,7,9,13,15, 17, and 18. These responses were all related to the need for further communication between tutor and a staff member of the literacy council. As demonstrated by the graph, this project improved retention when contact and communication were instituted in January 1999.



VI. REFLECTION

This approach of active listening and caring by the office staff to the tutors, certainly supports tutor retention. In our literacy council we will continue this approach in hopes of retaining tutors. Tutor contacts will be made on an ongoing basis.

QUESTION and RESPONSES

What is/or would be a reason that you did/or would stop tutoring?

1. Schedule conflict and lack of time to commit to to at least two to three hours per week.

2. Needed faster and more communication by staff member after tutor training, then realized that they did not have that much time to commitment .

3. Lack of student commitment and failure to call when unable to meet sessions. I get discouraged when this happens for it is a waste of my time.

4. Lack of time.

5. Lack of feedback and communication with staff of the agency. More local workshops to keep us abreast to new and more effective way of helping the students.

6. After tutoring for a number of years there was a lack of communication with the staff members.

7. Lack of correspondences with staff and no future updated training.

8. Someone to be used as a mentor to sit in on first one or two tutor sessions.

9. Lack of communication with staff and trainers.

10. Just not ready to tutor at this time.

11. More of a time commitment than I thought when I decided to take the training.

12. Students that are not dedicated to learning .

13. Lack of communication and help from staff members.

14. The thing that would help in keeping tutors would be more training whether it be more as an advanced tutor training classes or regular workshops dealing with new methods of teaching the adult learner.

15. The one thing that would cause me to quit tutoring would be the lack of feedback and support from the staff.

16. Having past tutors speak at a gathering designed to encourage people to become tutors.

17. Regular feedback from staff members

18. Monthly feedback from staff members and more tutor training or, if feasible a workshop

19. One of the most important reasons why I would quit tutoring would be a lack of support and information from the staff at FCLC . Tutor training refresher sessions would be useful if possible.

20. Two to three months after training have a session with tutors, staff, and trainer to discuss questions, problems, and needs that tutors may be experiencing after they start tutoring.

21. Family commitments.

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Peer Vocabulary Building Teams

Action Researcher's Name:

Pat Kriley

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940″s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

While students taking the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) are highly motivated to improve basic skills in mathematics and spatial relations, they shy away from developing vocabulary skills. This study is an effort to increase vocabulary skills by using a peer vocabulary building team system. Every student participating in this system increased word recognition from between twenty-three to five hundred eighty three percent.

II. PROBLEM

I work part-time as an ABE/GED instructor for Midwestern IU IV at Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church on McKean Street in Butler. Class meets on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and operates from mid September to the end of May. The setting is rural.

Two of the county's largest industrial employers are the Armco Steel Corporation and the Penreco Oil Refinery. Both of these companies use Job Family 4 of the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) as one of the major criteria for interviewing and hiring new staff and have designated the Butler Job Center to serve as their GATB testing site. Test dates for the GATB test are scheduled several times each year. If a prospective employee does not earn a high enough score in Job Family 4 of the test to warrant an interview with these companies, he/she is given an opportunity to take one retest.

The Job Service refers most of the students who attend my class. They already have their high school diploma and, in many cases, have completed some kind of post high school training program. They come to class for the specific purpose of improving their skills and getting a better score on the GATB.

While students are highly motivated to improve their basic skills in mathematics and spatial relations, they shy away from working to develop their vocabulary skills. Since the ability to identify synonyms and antonyms is part of the score for Job Family 4, their test results would improve if they would devote some study time increasing their vocabulary.

In case the reader is unfamiliar with the GATB, a short overview of the test follows: The GATB measures nine aptitudes using twelve 6-minute tests. Seventy three percent of the score for Job Family 4 includes the scores from the verbal, numerical (arithmetic reason & computation), and spatial aptitudes. The remaining 27% of the score in Job Family 4 include mark making, manual dexterity (placing and turning), and finger dexterity (assemble and disassemble). I have included a chart that names the twelve aptitudes and a breakdown of the aptitudes included in each of the five Job Families as Attachment A.

The people who want to work for Armco and Penreco probably have a higher aptitude for and are more interested in solving numerical, mechanical, and three dimensional problems because they went the to job center to secure a technical or manufacturing job. During our intake interview, most of these students share that they are not avid readers.

Students who study vocabulary might get a better score in Job Family 4 of the GATB and would increase their chances of receiving an interview for a job at Armco or Penreco.

I am always trying to improve my teaching methods. If I could find a way to encourage students who want to improve their GATB scores to study and improve their vocabulary, I would become a better ABE teacher.

III. PLANNING

In addition to completing all of the basic intake forms for program accountability, I administer the math section of the TABE locator test followed by the appropriate math level of Form 7 of the complete battery of the TABE test. The information provided from the TABE Individual Diagnostic Style Form serves as a guide in each student's individual education plan, and I use a variety of study aids to develop math and spatial relations skills. One of the most useful and popular study tools is the GATB study curriculum, which was developed in 1991 by Marilyn Gentzler and Debra Hudson at the Centre County Vocational Technical School.

Rationale for what I plan to do: Approximately twenty students who have attended classes at Saint Andrew's took their GATB retest on October 16. Although each of these students knew that improving his vocabulary skills would, in turn, improve his score in Job Family 4, only two brothers made a concerted effort to increase their sight vocabulary. Following one of my suggestions, they made flash cards to quiz each other on word recognition. Their efforts paid off, and they both came back to class after the test to let me know how much easier the vocabulary section of the test was after they had studied together. If fact, the Job Center noticed such a drastic improvement that they called me to ask what these two students did to improve their vocabulary scores.

These brothers had a built-in peer vocabulary building team. Since their scores improved so much after using flash cards, I thought, why not create peer vocabulary building teams in my class and see what happens?

I will begin the project when students return to class on January 4, 1998. I will stop collecting data on April 30.

Methods used to collect the data

Field notes, interviews with students who work in a vocabulary building team, and tests of learner performance (pre- and post-test of vocabulary gains).

Baseline

Before we start using peer vocabulary building teams, students will mark the number of words they know from the list of the 250 Most Commonly Used Words on Standardized Vocabulary Tests. Unfortunately, I don't remember where I found this list, but I have used it for years, and students have found it most helpful. (See Attachment B)

Criteria for success

After fifteen 30-minute study sessions with a peer vocabulary team, students will realize at least a 20% increase in the number of words they can identify in the list of the 250 Most Commonly Used Words on Standardized Vocabulary Tests.

Constraints

The Job Center cannot announce the date of the next GATB test until approximately three weeks before the test is actually scheduled. Since my class operates on an open enrollment basis, some students may not attend enough classes to participate in fifteen 30-minute study sessions. If this happens, I will still administer a post-test and note the number of study sessions they attended.

Approval

My supervisor Elaine Nagel has already given her approval to this project.

I will explain the rationale for using the peer vocabulary building team system and ask students to participate in the project. Students are regularly pre- and post-tested in other content areas, and they are generally receptive to any study aid we use in class. I'm confidant that most, if not all, students will respond favorably to participating is this research.

Colleagues to discuss and evaluate work

Elaine Nagel, my supervisor Dan LaPorte, the counselor for my class and Charlene Fleming, an instructor who works with me on Thursday evenings.

Problem statement

Will every student who attend ABE classes to study for the GATB test show at least a 20% increase in the number of words they can identify in the list of the 250 Most Commonly Used Words on Standardized Vocabulary Tests after fifteen 30-minute study sessions with a peer vocabulary team?

IV. ACTION/ RESULTS

Sixteen students registered in my class to study for the GATB test. Four students did not complete a vocabulary recognition post-test. Two of these students did not want to work on a vocabulary building team. I think that the reason why they declined to study with the group is that they were embarrassed that they didn't know many of the words. Both of these students took a copy of the definitions home with them, but I'm not certain if they studied the words. Another student completed the pre-test, but he didn't come to class regularly and did not study with a team. The last student who did not complete the post-test knew almost all of the words when he took the pre-test and decided to devote his class time to studying for the math sections of the GATB.

Following is a chart to show student achievement:

NAME	Vocabulary Team Sessions	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	% of Increase	Study at Home?
Eric	5	116	143	23%	No
Shawn	9	58	111	91%	No
Brian	4	28	90	221%	Yes
Larry	3	91	173	90%	Yes
James	16	6	41	583%	No
Terry	1	230	DNF	N/A	N/A
Lenny	5	140	190	35%	Yes
Charles	none	DNF	DNF	N/A	N/A
Rob	5	84	117	39%	No
Rhonda	10	75	121	61%	No
Jim	none	DNF	DNF	N/A	N/A
Randy	14	41	217	429%	Yes
Kris	8	44	121	175%	Yes
Ron	5	33	73	121%	No
Jay	2	70	DNF	N/A	N/A
Lisa	10	85	159	87%	Yes

Every student who participated in the Vocabulary Building Teams increased his word recognition skills by twenty-three to five hundred eighty three percent. In addition, students laughed more. They came to class more often and became cheerleaders for their team members. Many students who studied their words at home got their families involved in their learning. They were proud of themselves for their accomplishments. They felt more confident about taking the GATB test.

V. REFLECTION

This project illustrates the theory of Occam's Razor that states the simplest solution is usually the best. Although students did not have enough time to participate in fifteen sessions with their peer vocabulary team, they all learned new words, and they had fun in the process.

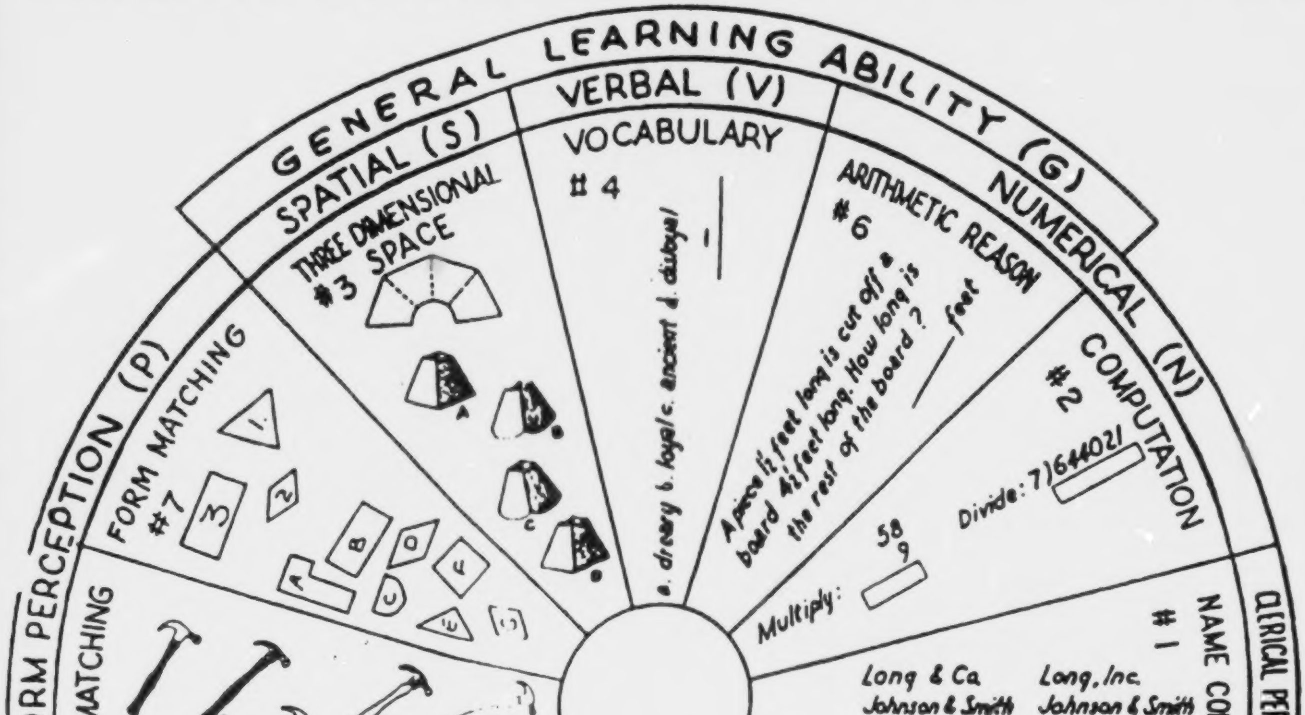
However, I would do one thing differently. Just because students learned the meanings of new words does not guarantee that their GATB test scores would improve. The verbal section of the GATB test measures, not only a person's ability to recognize the definitions of words, but also his ability to identify pairs of synonyms and antonyms.

Since I am confident that students will work in teams, I have asked my supervisor, Elaine Nagel, to purchase some vocabulary building study aides for next year that focus on synonym and antonym identification. I can see two benefits from using these books next year. First, students will be able to learn words and practice using them as they will appear on their GATB test. Second, those students who shied away from working on a peer vocabulary team might be more inclined to participate if they also had a workbook to use.

All of the students came together to make this project successful. Next year, I hope that I will be able to document the same student achievement when I add vocabulary workbooks to the recipe of peer vocabulary teams.

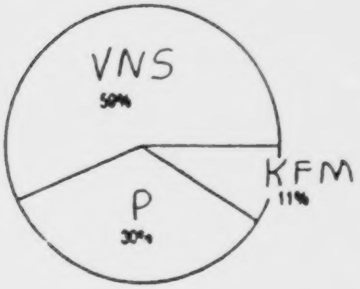
ATTACHMENT A

NINE APTITUDES MEASURED BY TWELVE TESTS IN THE GENERAL APTITUDE TEST BATTERY B-1002

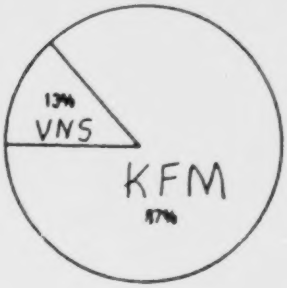

GENERAL LEARNING ABILITY (G)
SPATIAL (S)
THREE DIMENSIONAL SPACE
#3
VERBAL (V)
VOCABULARY
#4
a. dreary b. loyal c. ancient d. disloyal
NUMERICAL (N)
ARITHMETIC REASON
#6
A piece 1½ feet long is cut off a board 4⅓ feet long. How long is the rest of the board? ___ feet
COMPUTATION
#2
Divide: 7)644021
Multiply: 58 9
CLERICAL PERCEPTION (Q)
NAME COMPARISON
#1
Long & Co. Long, Inc.
Johnson & Smith Johnson & Smith
Armstrong F.C. Armstrong F.G.
S D
FINGER DEXTERITY (F)
DISASSEMBLE
#12
ASSEMBLE
#11
MANUAL DEXTERITY (M)
TURN
#10
PLACE
#9
MOTOR COORDINATION (K)
MARK MAKING
#8
FORM PERCEPTION (P)
TOOL MATCHING
#5
FORM MATCHING
#7
A
B
C
D
E

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

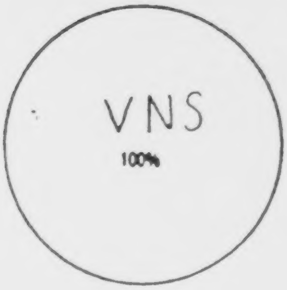
JOB FAMILY 1
Set-up Jobs



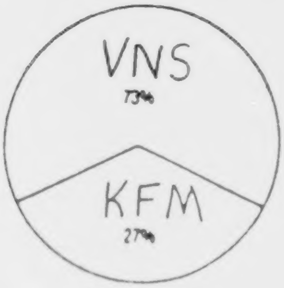
JOB FAMILY 2
Feeding-Offbearing Jobs



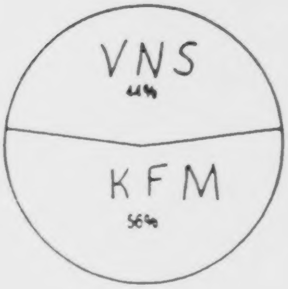
JOB FAMILY 3
Professional & Supervisory Jobs



JOB FAMILY 4
Skilled Trades & Clerical Jobs



JOB FAMILY 5
Semi-Skilled Jobs



ATTACHMENT B

Name____________________

Date	Date	
		ostentatious
		contentious
		reprove
		pessimism
		cursory
		profligate
		miser
		jocular
		fracas
		caricature
		corroborate
		precarious
		expository
		bolster
		daunt
		apathy
		ambiguous
		fervent
		vagrant
		undermine
		oblivious
		indifferent
		obscure
		objective
		revere
		discriminate
		embellish
		denounce
		innovate
		stagnant
		candid
		impartial
		discern
		vulnerable
		hypocritical
		eccentric
		disdain
		abstract
		valid
		subtle
		enigma
		inevitable
		inferred

________ ________diverse

________ ________articulate

________ ________apprehensive

________ ________benevolent

________ ________virulent

________ ________pious

________ ________skeptical

________ ________provincial

________ ________resignation

________ ________illuminate

________ ________resolution

________ ________servile

________ ________diligent

________ ________refute

________ ________anarchy

________ ________miser

________ ________discord

________ ________inclined

________ ________perceptive

________ ________superficial

________ ________lucid

________ ________immune

________ ________aesthetic

________ ________prodigal

________ ________assess

________ ________deter

________ ________complacent

________ ________contempt

________ ________eloquent

________ ________virtue

________ ________vital

________ ________guile

________ ________biased

________ ________censor

________ ________monotonous

________ ________trivial

________ ________profound

________ ________enhance

________ ________phenomenon

________ ________enduring

________ ________advocate

________ ________solitude

________ ________tentative

________ ________contemporary

________ ________provocative

________ ________adversary

________ ________grave
________ ________banal
________ ________depravity
________ ________temper
________ ________censure
________ ________extol
________ ________indulgent
________ ________erratic
________ ________insipid
________ ________euphony
________ ________antagonism
________ ________arbitrary
________ ________austere
________ ________expedite
________ ________heresy
________ ________compromise
________ ________condescend
________ ________fallacious
________ ________intangible
________ ________arrogant
________ ________compatible
________ ________dubious
________ ________solicit

________ ________elusive
________ ________facilitate
________ ________static
________ ________ironic
________ ________irrational
________ ________dogmatic
________ ________flagrant
________ ________frivolous
________ ________taciturn
________ ________infamous
________ ________redundant
________ ________authoritarian
________ ________exhaustive
________ ________reticent
________ ________fervor
________ ________scanty
________ ________dispassionate
________ ________pragmatic
________ ________didactic
________ ________deference
________ ________alleviate
________ ________vacillate
________ ________endorse

________ ________conspicuous
________ ________negligence
________ ________ephemeral
________ ________relegate
________ ________futile
________ ________condone
________ ________tranquility
________ ________dissent
________ ________conciliate
________ ________incessant
________ ________disparity
________ ________disparage
________ ________conventional
________ ________rigor
________ ________profuse
________ ________expedient
________ ________fastidious
________ ________prosaic
________ ________philanthropy
________ ________languid
________ ________astute
________ ________authentic
________ ________brevity

________ ________relevant
________ ________incoherent
________ ________mitigate
________ ________reprehensible
________ ________augment
________ ________engender
________ ________deride
________ ________acclaim
________ ________lethargic
________ ________fanatic
________ ________novel
________ ________solemn
________ ________ambivalent
________ ________indolence
________ ________benign
________ ________tedious
________ ________amiable
________ ________laud
________ ________caustic
________ ________atrophy
________ ________meander
________ ________instigate
________ ________heed

________ ________virtuoso

________ ________predecessor

________ ________deplete

________ ________compliant

________ ________inadvertent

________ ________acquiesce

________ ________levity

________ ________belittle

________ ________extraneous

________ ________digress

________ ________emulate

________ ________appease

________ ________sage

________ ________auspicious

________ ________universal

________ ________fickle

________ ________furtive

________ ________remorse

________ ________repress

________ ________gullible

________ ________respite

________ ________scrutinize

________ ________coalesce

________ ________orthodox

________ ________innate

________ ________preclude

________ ________efface

________ ________marred

________ ________ameliorate

________ ________prodigious

________ ________concise

________ ________immutable

________ ________stoic

________ ________innocuous

________ ________credulous

________ ________blasphemy

________ ________lax

________ ________cryptic

________ ________hinder

________ ________esoteric

________ ________pretentious

________ ________incongruous

________ ________unprecedented

________ ________merger

________ ________pedestrian

________ ________prudent

________ ________exemplary

________ ________sycophant

________ ___ _neutral

________ ________rescind

________ ________retract

________ ________fundamental

________ ________rejuvenate

________ ________contrite

________ ________exemplify

________ ________nullify

________ ________vilify

________ ________hypothetical

________ ________nostalgic

________ ________assuage

________ ________saccharine

________ ________stanza

________ ________jeopardy

________ ________supercilious

________ ________avarice

________ ________pivotal

________ ________blithe

________ ________scrupulous

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Implementation of a Procedure Manual to Improve Teacher Performance

Action Researcher's Name:

Eileen Madgar

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

The Adult Education Services of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Area Labor-Management Committee (SPALMC) has experienced inconsistencies in performance among its Adult Education staff. SPALMC's Adult Education staff has been told verbally what is considered proper policy however no written policies exist.

SPALMC's Adult Education Services offers ABE and GED classes at several locations throughout Beaver County. Instructors report directly to class sites and are expected to be at their site at set times.

Observation of instructors prior to intervention revealed that instructors arrived late to their class sites 50% of the time. Student questionnaires revealed that instructors were using individualized instruction 70% of the time.

The intervention will consist of written policies and staff in-service training. Data collection strategies consisted of student questionnaires, logs, and document analysis.

Following the implementation of the policy manual and in-service training instructors were on time for class 95% of the time and using individualized instruction 100% of the time.

II. PROBLEM

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Area Labor-Management Committee is located in Monaca, PA. We offer ABE/GED classes throughout Beaver County and serve approximately 180 students per year. I serve SPALMC as the Senior Education/Training Specialist. I was assigned this position in July 1998. It is my responsibility to assure the Adult Education Department is operating as required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education guidelines as well as SPALMC's administrative policies.

The problems we have experienced may be the result of several years of poor communication among SPALMC administration and Adult Education staff. It is clear that instructors have always followed their own schedule and their own procedures when in the classroom. No formal instructor policies or evaluations have ever been developed or utilized. Areas of concern are employee start times and instructor procedures in the classroom (specifically, intake procedures and using individualized instruction).

The improvement of these areas would assure that employees are working the designated hours and the time schedule they are being paid for. Improvement of intake procedures and the use of individualized instruction would assure that students are receiving proper instruction based on meaningful intake procedures. Consistencies in these areas will also ease transition of students who may need to change class locations or times.

III. PLANNING

The plan of intervention I will use consists of developing a procedure manual for SPALMC's instructors. This manual will outline expectations of the instructors in areas such as required start time for full time and part time employees. The manual will also provide explanation of required intake procedures and the proper use of individualized instruction. Upon developing the manual I will conduct in-service training with current SPALMC instructors utilizing the manual. Topics will include employee start times, proper intake procedures and developing individualized lessons for students. Each instructor will be required to sign an in-service sheet stating they understand the policies/procedures. If further training is needed I will provide that training or contact the Northwest Professional Development Center to see what is available. The proposed intervention plan will take approximately four months. During this project I will use questionnaires, document analysis, and logs to collect data.

A baseline will be established by conducting interviews of students to establish the current intake procedures. I will also observe instructor arrival times to establish the rate of instructor tardiness.

The criteria for success following the implementation of the procedure manual/instructor handbook will be: 1. Teachers will work the required hours of the position and be on time for class 100% of the time; 2. Intake procedures will be conducted according to the manual 95% of the time; and 3. Students will receive individualized instruction 95% of the time.

Possible constraints may consist of a lack of observation time and an inability to contact students for an interview. It will be necessary to have approval of SPALMC's executive director in conducting teacher observations and developing the manual.

I contacted the Resource Specialist at the AdvancE State Literacy Resource Center in Harrisburg who provided me with several publications. The most useful to me in developing a manual is the Adult Programs Employee Handbook developed by the ARIN IU 28 Regional

Educational Service Agency. I will be able to use this manual and adapt several policies and formats to my project.

Will the implementation of a procedure manual improve teacher performance by reducing inconsistencies in student intake, increasing individualized instruction in the classroom, and eliminating instructor tardiness?

IV. ACTION

Following my observations of instructor arrival times, student interviews, and document analysis I met with each instructor individually. In February 1999 I discussed the reasoning and results of my observations, interviews and document analysis. After discussing the results with each instructor, I discussed the new instructor handbook. These policies were developed in addition to SPALMC administrative policies in order to address areas specific to the Adult Education Department. I discussed the areas of concern and offered materials to use when planning for individualized instruction. I also made each instructor aware that more training is available if they were interested.

Problems that occurred during the project were minor. For example, instructor excuses for being late for class or for not using individualized instruction, including the excuse that that is how we have always done things". I addressed this problem with the understanding that the idea of doing something different can be frightening to someone who has, for years, always done the same thing without ever being asked to do anything differently.

V. RESULTS

The first stage of data collection took place prior to implementing the instructor's handbook and with approval from the executive director. I conducted observations of instructors' arrival times at their assigned class sites. I kept a record of the start times in a log for two months (Attachment 1). The observations revealed that instructors were late for class 50% of the time. During this same two-month period I developed a student questionnaire (Attachment 2). I randomly chose students from each class site and called them on the telephone. I asked the same questions to each student I made contact with. These questionnaires revealed that student intake procedures were being followed 98% of the time. The questionnaires also revealed that students were receiving individualized instruction 70% of the time. These percentages were higher than I expected and proved that intake procedures were being followed consistently.

Following this phase of data collection I developed the instructor handbook (Attachment 3). I used this manual to discuss proper procedures with instructors and to provide some materials and training on individualized instruction.

The second stage of data collection was conducted following the implementation of the procedure manual. I followed the same data collection strategies as I did in stage one. This time teacher observations revealed that instructors were on time for class 95% of the time. This is a 45% improvement over my prior observations. Although I stated that the criterion for success is 100% I am very pleased with the improvement. In addition, data also revealed that individualized instruction is taking place 100% of the time. This is a 30% improvement and coincides with the established criteria for success. This second stage of data collection leads me to believe that the intervention I used was successful. Instructors have shown improvement in each of the problem areas.

VI. REFLECTION

I am very pleased with the results of this project and I would not do anything differently. I am certain that this project has had a positive impact on our program. It has assisted me to put the problems we were having into perspective and plan the best action to take.

Attachment 1

Log #1 Instructor Arrival Times

Instructor A (8:00 am start time)

Date

Location

Arrival Time

Instructor B (5:30 pm start time)

Date

Location

Arrival Time

Attachment 2

Confidential Student Questionnaire

Class Site:

Month of Enrollment:

1. How were you greeted the first time you entered the classroom?

2. Did the instructor introduce you to the other members of the class?

3. Did the instructor explain the forms you filled out?

4. Did the instructor explain the results of the pretest you took?

5. Did the instructor answer any questions you had?

6. Did the instructor discuss a plan with you on what you may need to study in class?

7. Do you feel that you are working at a pace that is good for you?

8. Are you given materials that focus on what you need to learn, different from others in the class?

9. Is there anything you would like to see done differently in the class?

10. Do you have any questions?

Attachment 3

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Area Labor-Management Committee's Adult Education Services Instructor Handbook

Philosophy

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Area Labor-Management Committee's Adult Education Department operates on the philosophy that learning is a lifelong process that enhances and enriches lives. It is our purpose to provide the support and services that adults need in order to be successful in their educational or employment endeavors. Quality instruction, academic counseling, and referral to community agencies make this possible.

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide the Adult Education Services staff with more specific description of job duties and requirements of GED instructors. This handbook is not meant as a substitute for or replacement of any policies established by SPALMC administration.

Department of Education Organizational Chart

Class Schedule and Assignments

Monday, Wednesday, Friday
9:00 am to 12:00 pm College Hill United Methodist Church, Beaver Falls
Richard 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm Ambridge Job Center

Tuesday, Thursday
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm IBEW Hall, Vanport

Tuesday, Thursday
Eileen
9: 00 am to 12:00 pm YMCA, New Brighton

Tuesday, Thursday
Ray
5:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Full Time Instructors

Full time instructors are required to work 40 hours per week. Start time for full time instructors is 8:00 am. Instructors teaching morning classes should report to the class site at 8: 00 am Morning classes are to run from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. Afternoon classes should run from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Any necessary schedule changes should be approved by the Executive Director.

Donna Nedelk Boyer
(8 Hours- PT)
Executive Director

Eileen Madgar
(40 Hours - FT)
Senior Education/Training Specialist
Department Chair

Richard Carland
(40 Hours - FT)
Education/Training Specialist

Raymon Smith
(10 Hours - PT)
Education/Training Specialist

Barbara Colwell
(16 Hours - PT)
Training/Outreach Specialist

Paula Hart
(12 Hours - PT)
Administrative Assistant/Secretary

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION
able
PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Increasing Student Motivation Through The Development of a Personal Mission Statement

Action Researcher's Name:

Jeanette G. Matthews

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

Students' lack of participation in class, excess absences, and the instructor's perception of a general lack of motivation at the Goodwill Employment Help Center in McKeesport cause this researcher to believe that many students need help in establishing goals for themselves. I hoped that developing a personal mission statement would help increase the motivation of my students. Motivation would be measured by using pre and post-surveys, creation of a mission statement, field notes, interviews, and questionnaires. It was hoped that this intervention would produce a 20% increase in students' motivation. Increase in motivational attitude would be determined through analysis of the above data collection methods. Due to some unexpected variables, results were not as anticipated.

II. PROBLEM

Goodwill offers a variety of learning opportunities for adults at their South Side location and other community based sites. Recognizing a need in the Mon Valley area, the McKeesport site was opened in May of 1998 to serve welfare recipients. Affected by TANF regulations, students are referred by their Department of Welfare caseworkers to Goodwill's Community Solutions Program where they are provided with opportunity

* to study for their GED

* benefit from ABE studies

* learn job readiness skills

* profit from job training in data entry and child care provider programs as well as drivers' education

These students are eligible for the Community Solutions program only if they had participated, and had not been successful, in at least one other welfare-to-work program. I question whether students are able to see themselves in the role of a successful worker, earning sufficient income to provide for their families. Lacking previous educational and work related successes, some have expressed a feeling of security with welfare dependence, and an inability to conceptualize themselves in any other role than that in which they currently are. Students have said that they feel that success lie outside their locus of control. My role as instructor is not only to facilitate their learning, but also seek ways in which to motivate and challenge, and to build self-esteem and confidence.

It is perceived that students' potential may not be fully realized, and may frustrate educational and career development. Therefore, it was felt to be timely and appropriate to address this issue. I feel that once an individual is able to accept responsibility for the success of reaching their learning and career goals, the more motivated they become. The more they wish to succeed; the more they do succeed. Experiencing the success of some of my students, I have seen the contagious effect on others in the class. This can only demonstrate a positive attitude among students, Goodwill, and staff.

III. PLANNING

Problem defined: the problem is "How can I help instill in my students a sense of responsibility for academic and career accomplishments that will ultimately result in more motivated and successful students?"

Every two weeks new students are accepted into the class. The number varies between one (1) and five (5) new students at each intake, with an average of two (2) new students each enrollment time. My plan was to begin on November 24, and to use students enrolling from that date until the end of the year 1998 in this research study. Each participant would be involved in the study for six (6) weeks. I anticipated that between ten (10) and fifteen (15) individuals would be recruited for this activity. Students would first be asked to participate and sign a release form if they chose to be involved in the project. Then, each individual would be asked to complete a questionnaire in which their attitudes would be assessed. Following would be an informal discussion about goals, responsibility and determining one's likelihood of achieving goals. This discussion also included an imagery session in which the participants were asked to visualize their lives being different than that which they now experience. The discussion concluded with my talking about mission statements. I explained that organizations have goals; and they spend much time and effort in developing missions statements directed toward successfully meeting those goals.

Many have written of their philosophy regarding the use of personal mission statements, including Steven Covey in his book Seven Habits of Seven Highly Effective People. Thus, this concept became the focus of my intervention. Lastly, participants were asked to develop their own mission statement.

As a baseline for this project, attitudes of those participating in the class prior to the beginning of this project were inspected. Those students, upon entering the program, had completed The Workcare Inventory. The purpose of this inventory is to gauge students' attitudes and skills in regard to work.

Criteria for success for the intervention will be realized if students demonstrate a clearer understanding of their power in achieving their goals. They will also become more goal oriented as a result of developing their own personal mission statement; and that the mission statement will cause a 20% increase in students' acceptance of responsibility for whether or not they achieve their goals. This 20% increase will be determined through analysis of a post Workcare inventory, field notes documenting instructor perception of participants' approach to classroom participation, and attendance records. Additionally, a follow up group discussion will solicit responses that are expected to provide insight into participants' attitudes. Results will then be compared to discussion from the initial discussion that took place at the beginning of this project.

IV. ACTION

The first step in the intervention process was to ask all students to become involved in the project. All students, including those not specifically involved in the intervention, were given a letter briefly explaining the purpose of the project. Attached was a consent form, which the students signed if they wished to be included in this study. Twelve students signed consent forms; however, for various reasons (2 secured employment, 2 withdrew, 3 decided, prior to writing their mission statement, to not continue in the project), over time this group decreased to five (5) active participants.

After orientation to the program, all twelve (12) were provided with additional information about the research project. Information was given regarding the philosophy of a mission statements. Goodwill's, and the researchers personal mission statement, were examined. Students were then asked to develop their own mission statement. Following are portions of some of these statements:

* "To accomplish this goal, I'll have to attend training classes, find reliable transportation, attend classes regularly, be punctual, work hard to be responsible and find back-up

childcare."

* "I will continue to work hard, be responsible, cooperative, and stay dedicated to overcoming any obstacles that may keep me from becoming successful."

* "What I will do to reach my goals: study more, accept help with my GED studies, participate in class, do class work as required, be more serious about my goals and education."

Weekly, for five (5) weeks, participants were asked to review their mission statement, and to share thoughts about the impact that the statement was having with their approach to learning. Students involved in this study were given a different questionnaire, which asked more explicit questions.

Some said that each time they looked at their mission statement (I had asked that they keep it in the front of their daily binder), it caused them to feel more committed to adhering to what they said in the paper. They felt that it was like a promise, and they should keep their promises.

V. RESULTS

Results from a Workcare Inventory that had been given to eleven (11) program participants who were not used in this study, indicate that they experience dissatisfaction with jobs that they have held because they

* feel that they have little or no control over decisions concerning the job

* they have a feeling of insecurity about their problem solving skills

* and they lack knowledge and skills for dealing with stress

Results also indicated that they held others more accountable for their success. However, it was observed that some of the eleven (11) students who did not participate in the intervention seemed to exhibit a growth and accountability for themselves.

Situations arose that presented difficuity with administering the intervention to its completion. Because of TANF regulations, several students were required to leave the academic portion of the program prematurely in order to secure employment. Consequently, the original twelve (12) participants decreased to five (5). At the end of six (6) weeks, each of the five (5) remaining students were given a final questionnaire to complete. Two students chose not to complete the form. These two (2) students had recently learned that, because of the limited number of TANF days left, they were required to begin an active job search. They expressed their dissatisfaction with the TANF regulations and demonstrated this by their refusal to complete this study. Of the three (3) remaining students, all felt that their mission statement had made a difference and felt that they were more responsible for their academic and career successes. Following are some responses from the three participants' (3) who did complete the form:

- "... mission paper gives me strength and courage to go on."
- "... helps me with my studies and my attitude."
- "... it made my attitude more positive."

Classroom observation and conversations of each student during the week of January 4, 1999, indicate that this group lacks a thorough understanding of goals, are unclear about what they need to do to attain their goals, and that they have a pessimistic attitude about their likelihood of attaining those goals. For example, many students, when asked what their academic goals are, will simply say that they want to "... get their GED" or "get a job". But they are unable to express the steps that they must follow in order to reach the expressed goal. When asked whose responsibility it is to see that they attain their goals, several responded that it is the instructors, or an individual other than themselves. Or, they may say that circumstances determine whether they will be successful ñ if they can work out childcare, transportation or some other barrier. They seem unable to comprehend that working toward a solution to their barrier(s) is their responsibility, and that in overcoming this barrier(s), they are addressing responsibility for their success. They see this as an extrinsic force that deters them from reaching goals.

VI. REFLECTION

Initially, I felt that the intervention would cause participants to become the responsible and motivated students that educators like to see in their classrooms. Perhaps this would have occurred had the students' life experiences been different. For example: had they not been mandated to attend a program (or find immediate employment without the skills that they needed), had they had more choices in the work skills programs offered, had they not the barriers that face so many single mothers, or if they had a more positive attitude about learning and their likelihood of success, if they had encouragement and support from family and friends - then perhaps attitudes would be different.

Participants seemed unable to comprehend the purpose of the mission statement. It appeared that, for the most part, they wrote what they thought I wanted them to write. It appears that the writing of a mission statement is not sufficient cause for them to look differently at the issue of responsibility. This is not to say that they do not desire to reach their goals; but that they still are unsure of their ability to do so and that the power to do so lie within themselves.

Reflecting on this action research, I have come to the conclusion that applying this intervention to students new to the program was not the best course of action. Perhaps students need to be involved in the program for a longer period of time, experience some achievements, and "buy" into the program before an intervention of this magnitude can be effective. Should a second phase of this action research be undertaken, the researcher should have a better understanding of the student served. Additionally, the student should be given time to become acclimated to the learning experience.

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the participants, perhaps a discussion group could be formed in which students would discuss issues of concern to them. These issues might include problems with childcare, transportation, coordinating services, family issues, living arrangements and conditions, and other facets that may be interfering with their ability to take class work seriously. Personnel would work with students in assisting them in resolving their issues. Then, somewhere between two (2) and four (4) weeks into the program, program participants may be more prepared to become involved in such an activity.

The term "Mission Statement" seemed foreign to most of the participants; some had never heard the term. They appeared to have difficulty comprehending the concept. Goals seemed a clearer concept. In a follow up intervention, developing a goal achievement list ñ or some other name other than mission statement ñ might be more comprehensible to them.

Early reflection on this project caused me to feel that it was not successful. Further reflection tells me that, even though I did not receive the results I had originally anticipated, the project was, in fact, a success. Success does not always mean getting the results that we hoped for originally. This project indicates success because it shows what does not work (too early an intervention), what needs to be investigated and further understood (the participants), and suggestions for future considerations.

APPENDICES

PAGE

A. Mission Statement: 1

Goodwill Industries of Pittsburgh

Instructor's (personal mission statement)

B. Mission Statement lesson outline 2-3

C. Workcare Inventory 4-7

Inventory completed by students not participating in action research project and prior to implementation of project.

D. Student questionnaire 8-9

Completed by each participant involved with action research project.

E. Follow-up questionnaire 10

Completed by each participant involved with action research project.

Goodwill Mission Statement

Our Mission

Goodwill Industries of Pittsburgh is a work force development agency and network of not-for-profit business whose mission is to provide job preparation and training, placement assistance, employment opportunities, and related social services and supports for people with special needs to help them enjoy the dignity and benefits of work and a better quality of life.

My Personal Mission Statement

As an instructor at McKeesport's Goodwill Employment Help Center, it is my mission to provide individual GED/ABE instruction and job preparation training. It is my objective to plan and implement instruction that will most benefit the students in their transtion into the workforce.

MISSION STATEMENT LESSON

1. **What is a mission statement?**
   It is your affirmation, philosophy and purpose rolled into one. It is your personal challenge to yourself. It is an opportunity to bring your goals into focus and transfer your ideals into the real world. It is your success plan.

2. **Who should write a mission statement?**
   Everyone

3. **What are the ground rules?**

- **Define yourself.**
  - What kind of person are you?
  - What do you do?
  - What is your character?
  - Who or what are you dedicated to?
  - Affirm that you will strive to get better, do new things, and grow.
  - Where do you aspire to be?
  - What do you want to achieve?
  - How will you achieve your goals?
- Use your goals and purpose to define your mission statement.
- Here are some words that will help you define your mission statement:
  - Will
  - Dedication
  - Persist
  - Honest
  - Ethical
  - Positive
  - Enthusiastic
  - Fun
  - Health
  - Learn new things
  - Listen
  - Help
  - Provide
  - Encourage
  - Others
  - Continually
- Describe the things you think you are and the things you seek to accomplish or become
- Don't be afraid or embarrassed to flatter yourself
- Affirm everything you think you are or think you want to become

4. **THE Dos**

- Unite your essay and give it direction with a theme or thesis. The thesis is the main points your want to communicate.
- Before you begin writing, choose what you want to discuss and the order in which you want to discuss it
- Use concrete examples from your life experience to support your thesis and distinguish yourself from other applications
- Write about what interests you, excites you. That's what the admissions staff wants to read.
- Start your essay with an attention grabbing led an anecdotal quote, question or engaging description of a scene
- End your essay with a conclusion that refers back to the led and restates your thesis
- Revise your essay at least three times
- \In addition to your editing asks someone else to critique your personal statement for you.
- Proofread your personal statement by reading it out loud or reading it into a tape recorder and playing back the tape
- Write clearly succinctly.

5. **The don'ts**

- Don't include information that doesn't support your thesis.
- Don't start your essay with "I was born in..."
- Don't write an autobiography, itinerary or resume
- \don't try to be a clown
- don't try to impress with vocabulary
- don't provide a collection of generic statements and platitudes
- don't make up things.

THE WORKCARE INVENTORY

The following statements are grouped in categories that represent specific work-related attitudes and skills. For each statement, circle one of the five responses that best describes your feelings.

CORE SKILLS

PERSONAL WORK BELIEFS

	NEVER	RARELY	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS
• I'm satisfied with my job.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I have control over the decisions concerning my job.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I'm confident in my ability to do my job.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I believe my failures or disappointments are only a temporary setback.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10

WORK ATTITUDES

• I understand my company's business and the products and services it provides.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I understand my job responsibilities and the expectations of my supervisor.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I organize and plan my work around my major objectives.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I understand how I'm evaluated on my performance.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• My supervisor understands my career goals and supports my decisions.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10

LITERACY

• I have no problem reading signs and labels.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I have no problem reading newspapers and magazines.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I feel comfortable about my writing skills.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I can balance my checkbook and can easily do other tasks that require me to compute numbers.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• My reading, writing and math skills meet the requirements of my job.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

• People tell me I'm a good listener.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• My verbal skills are good.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10

THE WORKCARE INVENTORY

	NEVER	RARELY	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS
• People understand what I say the first time.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I have no difficulty in presenting ideas to groups of people.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
PROBLEM-SOLVING					
• I know how to look at a problem and identify its possible causes.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I know how to identify potential solutions to a specific problem.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I know how to develop a plan in implementing a solution.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I know how to check to see if the solution is working.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
TEAMWORK					
• I understand the goals and objectives of the work team.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I function well in group and team settings.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I contribute to the goals of my work team.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• People tell me I'm a team player.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
PERSONAL QUALITY					
• When doing my job, I do it right the first time, even if it means a delay.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I understand the key concepts concerning total quality management.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I know how to use the quality tools that have been implemented in my company.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
SELF-CARE ON THE JOB					
• I consider myself to be in good physical health.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I try to include some form of physical activity during my workday.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I eat healthy foods on and off the job.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I know how to reduce stress and tension on the job.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10

THE WORKCARE INVENTORY

	NEVER	RARELY	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS
• I know the safety policies of my company.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• When working, I don't take unnecessary risks that may endanger myself or my co-workers.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I practice appropriate safety measures when traveling.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I use alcohol responsibly and don't use illicit drugs.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• When operating a motor vehicle, I use my seat belt.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I take precautions in protecting myself from job-related injuries such as lower back pain and carpal tunnel syndrome.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10

PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS/PLANNING

• I can identify the cause(s) of my stress and effectively deal with it.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I'm able to effectively balance the challenges of my work and my personal life.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I'm aware of all the services that may be available through my company that can assist me with such problems as work/family conflicts, alcohol and drug dependence, child care, elder care and work-related conflicts.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I'm aware of what resources are available in my community to assist me with personal problems.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• In my personal planning, I take into consideration my retirement needs.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I live within my financial means, without experiencing excessive debt or hardship.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10
• I have an emergency savings account equal to six months of my living expenses.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10

OTHER WORK ISSUES

• I understand my company's benefit and compensation plans.	−10	−5	0	+5	+10

THE WORKCARE INVENTORY

	NEVER	RARELY	SOMETIMES	USUALLY	ALWAYS
• I understand my company's health benefit plan.	–10	–5	0	+5	+10
• I understand my responsibilities and the limitations of my health benefit program (deductibles, coinsurance, copayments) before I use the plan.	–10	–5	0	+5	+10
• If offered, I understand my company's pension and savings plans.	–10	–5	0	+5	+10
• I'm aware of my rights concerning such issues as mental, physical and sexual harassment and discrimination based on age, sex, race or disability.	–10	–5	0	+5	+10
• I'm aware of alternative work schedules that my company may sponsor, such as flex time.	–10	–5	0	+5	+10
• I try to be environmentally aware within my place of work.	–10	–5	0	+5	+10

WHAT DO MY RESULTS MEAN?

This simple quiz is designed to graphically show the strengths and weaknesses of your WorkCare skills. In each category, see where your responses are concentrated. If your scores concentrate in the two left columns (negative scores), this suggest that your WorkCare skills may need significant work. Scores in the middle of the scale suggest that your attitudes and skills are average, but still need careful examination. If your responses concentrate to the right, congratulations! This suggests that you've achieved a good balance in your work and life.

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

In looking at your results, you may have found that you need to improve certain WorkCare skills and attitudes. The following chart will help you locate specific topics within this book that can help you. We encourage you to read these sections and to try out some of the ideas they present. You may also want to get additional information from the "Resources" identified under each topic.

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. When I am given instructions, I sometimes don't follow them exactly. This is because:
   a. The person giving instructions didn't make him/herself clear.
   b. I felt there was a better way to do it.
   c. I forgot or as unclear about what I was to do and didn't ask questions.
   d. I didn't feel like doing it.
2. If I have made a mistake, I will
   a. not tell anyone unless I have to
   b. admit that I made the mistake and do what I can to fix it
   c. act like I don't know who made the mistake
   d. blame someone else
3. If I don't understand something, I
   a. try to figure it out myself
   b. ask questions so that I do understand
   c. act as if I do understand
4. My success depends on
   a. others doing what they are supposed to do
   b. myself
   c. not sure
5. I will do whatever it takes to meet my goals.
   YES ______ NO ___
   If no, why not? ____
   ____
6. ☐ a. People often succeed because they are in the right place at the right time.
   ☐ b. Success is mostly dependent on hard work and ability.
7. ☐ a. When things go wrong in my life, it is generally because I have made mistakes.
   ☐ b. Misfortunes occur in my life regardless of what I do.
8. ☐ a. Good children are mainly products of good parents.
   ☐ b. Some children turn out bad no matter how their parents behave.
9. ☐ a. When I think back on the good things that happened to me, I believe they happened mainly because of something I did.
   ☐ b. The bad things that have happened in my life have mainly resulted from circumstances outside my control.
10. ☐ a. To avoid punishing children guarantees that they will grow up irresponsible.
    ☐ b. Spanking children is never appropriate.
11. ☐ a. I often feel that I have little influence over the direction my life is taking.
    ☐ b. It is unreasonable to believe that fate or luck plays a crucial part in how my life turns out.

12. ☐ a. Some customers will never be satisfied no matter what you do.
☐ b. You can satisfy customers by giving them what they want when they want it.

13. ☐ a. Anyone can get good grades in school if he or she works hard enough.
☐ b. Some people are never going to excel in school no matter how hard they try.

14. ☐ a. People seek responsibility in work.
☐ b. People try to get away with doing as little as they can.

15. ☐ a. The most popular people seem to have a special, inherent charisma that attracts people to them.
☐ b. People become popular because of how they behave.

16. ☐ a. Things over which I have little control just seem to occur in my life.
☐ b. Most of the time I feel responsible for the outcomes I produce.

17. ☐ a. I am persuasive when I know I'm right.
☐ b. I can persuade most people even when I'm not sure I'm right.

18. ☐ a. I tend to plan ahead and generate steps to accomplish the goals that I have set.
☐ b. I seldom plan ahead because things generally turn out OK anyway.

19. ☐ a. Some things are just meant to be.
☐ b. We can change anything in our lives by hard work, persistence, and ability.

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Issues Around Teaching Competencies in a Family Literacy Program

Action Researcher's Name:

Susan Finn Miller

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

This project looks at issues around integrating competencies into the curriculum of a family literacy program in Lancaster, PA. The study focuses on two well-established Even Start sites in Lancaster which served thirty-four ethnically diverse adult learners with a minimum of fifty hours of instruction in the 1998-99 school year. The program offers twenty-five hours per week of ABE, GED, and ESOL instruction for parents while their preschool children participate in early childhood classrooms. This study investigates the reasons why this family literacy program has had inconsistent results for the last several years on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) while at the same time showing positive gains on other standardized tests. To explore this issue in some depth, four teachers and eight students participated in an interview to share their perceptions of integrating competencies into the GED curriculum. In an attempt to effect a positive change on the CASAS results, teachers were trained in using the CASAS diagnostic profile and encouraged to intentionally integrate the CASAS competencies into their GED instruction by utilizing the CASAS curriculum which is specifically designed for this purpose. The results of CASAS pre and posttesting did not show measurable improvement compared to past years. From the interview data, it is clear that while students would apparently welcome some emphasis on competencies, teachers, for a variety of reasons, find it difficult to systematically address competencies in their GED curriculum. Trying to effectively address the needs and goals of adult learners is at the heart of this curriculum concern.

II. PROBLEM

This study, focuses on the Even Start family literacy program in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The population of Lancaster County is 454,063. The School District of Lancaster, an urban school district which is one of the collaborators for the family literacy program along with Lancaster Head Start, has one of the highest high school drop-out rates in Pennsylvania. The Lancaster Lebanon Intermediate Unit 13 (IU13), which provides publicly funded educational services --including adult literacy education-- to schools and the community in Lancaster and Lebanon counties, is the sponsoring agency and employs the adult literacy staff and faculty. IU13 offers family literacy, ABE, GED, and ESOL classes throughout the two county area and serves about 2500 students annually.

My work for IU13 includes supporting the ten teachers who work in the family literacy program, eight of whom were newly hired in the fall of 1998 to help start new classes. In addition, I am responsible to train teachers in the appropriate use of the assessment tools we are required to use for reporting to state and federal funders. Beyond this, I am available to assist teachers when they have questions about teaching methods and materials. Five of the nine teachers are teaching at sites in Lancaster and the other four are located in Lebanon which is about thirty miles northwest of Lancaster. The nine female and one male instructors in family literacy teach part time. Their schedules vary from three to twenty hours of teaching per week. One teacher works full time by combining teaching with other training and administrative duties. In Lancaster, there are four sites providing family literacy services and in Lebanon, there are two. We also provide home-based instruction when necessary.

For this project I decided to focus primarily on the two firmly established family literacy sites in Lancaster. Even Start is in its seventh year of service to the community. During the 1998-99 school year, I have been an integral part of the two family literacy classes, which became the focus of this study, since for parts of the school year I team taught at both sites. Therefore, I am well acquainted with the teachers as well as most of the students who participated this year.

For seven years, our Even Start family literacy program has been using the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) as one of the assessment instruments for reporting purposes; however, we have typically shown inconsistent gains on this test. In the past seven years, our program achieved the state standard, which stipulates a three point average gain between pre and post testing, only twice. In other words, there were five years for which we did not meet the standard. This year we have expanded our family literacy program in Lancaster and added sites in Lebanon. We have continued to use the CASAS in our program and have trained new teachers on its use at our new sites. The focus of my project is 1) why we have seen inconsistent results on CASAS, and 2) what might lead to more significant gains.

Since obtaining the GED is the most important motivation articulated by students who come to our family literacy program, I am interested in how to balance this goal with other more contextualized learning goals, i.e. life skills competencies. Of course, all adult literacy programs in the state are expected to meet certain standards in order to demonstrate their effectiveness; thus, finding the best way to capture learning gains is also at issue for our program. One of my goals at the outset of this project was to try to understand the reasons why we were not meeting the standard for CASAS. Upon looking more deeply into our assessment practices, it became clear that we were exceeding the state standard when using other standardized assessments acceptable to the state. In other words, in addition to the CASAS, our family literacy teachers were also using the Test of Adult Basic Skills (TABE), the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), as well as GED practice tests and the actual GED test, and students consistently showed acceptable gains on all of these assessments. So for instance, it was not unusual for a student to score a one point gain or even a negative gain on CASAS while at the same time showing a two or three grade level increase in math or reading on the TABE. In addition, students who were showing minimal or negative gains on the CASAS were often passing the GED.

I began to wonder what might be the reasons for this seeming incongruity. Were teachers targeting the CASAS competencies in their instruction? Included in the CASAS materials is an elegant diagnostic system for designing an individual student profile as well as a class profile which show, based on the test results, which competencies on which focus to instruction. In addition to these profiles, there is a CASAS curriculum which outlines many lessons integrating the CASAS competencies into the GED curriculum. Every teacher has access to this curriculum and has been encouraged to use it. If, in fact, teachers were not using the CASAS diagnostic information and the curriculum, I became curious to understand why. I began to wonder how hard or easy it was for instructors to try to target these competencies in an ABE/GED class. I began to question how our teachers felt about the relevance of focusing on CASAS competencies. Moreover, I was equally interested in how the students felt about targeting competencies.

Would students who were focused on getting their GED welcome this kind of instruction or would they resist? Do students consider these skills to be personally relevant? How do students feel about their skills in these areas? I began to wonder about the appropriateness of focusing on competencies with our ABE/GED learners. Given some of the controversies over a competency-based approach outlined by Collins (1983) and Auerbach (1986, 1989), I began to be dubious about the mandate to address competencies with our learners. Might we be better off maintaining focus on the students' academically-oriented goals. Might we be better off using other assessment instruments available for reporting purposes? Were we missing an opportunity to address competencies or not?

At the outset of this project, I assumed that the reason for our inconsistent CASAS results was that teachers were not targeting the CASAS competencies in their instruction. This assumption was based, in part, on the realization that instructors were also using the TABE, the GED, and the BEST and typically showing consistent gains on all of these. My goal for the project was to discover whether, in fact, my assumption that teachers were not targeting competencies in their instruction were true, and if true, to try to understand the reasons why teachers were not focusing on competencies. In addition, I wanted to know whether an intentional focus on the CASAS competencies in the curriculum of our family literacy program would yield more favorable results, i.e. achieving an average three point gain between pre and posttesting. In other words, it was my goal to encourage instructors to intentionally address CASAS competencies in their classes with the hope that learners would show increased gains on CASAS. In addition, it was very important to me to invite teachers and students to dialogue with me about the issue of focusing on competencies in their classes.

It is my responsibility to support instruction in our family literacy program. Additionally, in my role as the assessment trainer for the Southeast Region, I am well aware of the need to demonstrate accountability to funders through gains on standardized assessment instruments. Also at issue is the notion that a competency-based curriculum has the potential to address the needs of learners. Moreover, it is common sense that assessment -- particularly when using a competency-based assessment tool -- be linked to instruction.

At a minimum, I believed that this project would invite staff in our program into a conversation about using a competency-based assessment tool to help us to grow in understanding the issues. In addition, I hoped that if teachers utilized the tools at their disposal, i.e. the diagnostic profiles and the CASAS curriculum, that we would improve our standardized testing results.

III. PLANNING

I began my project by collecting CASAS data from previous years in order to establish a baseline. The data confirmed that our CASAS results did not consistently meet the standard. We had met the standard of a three point average gain only twice in the past seven years. In the fall of 1998, I talked with each of the family literacy teachers about targeting competencies for instruction and made sure that each of them understood how to use the CASAS tests, the diagnostic tools, and the CASAS curriculum. I planned to collect pre and posttesting data, for students with at least fifty hours of instruction, in the spring of 1999 with the hope of seeing better gains.

At the outset, I was aware of the constraint of time. I hoped that teachers would have enough time to incorporate competency-based instruction into their curriculum in order to impact test results. Another factor which I expected to have an effect on this project was the general academic approach to instruction, based on student-stated goals, to get their GED. Because it takes some creative lesson planning -- even with the availability of the CASAS curriculum -- for instructors to integrate GED instruction with lessons on competencies, I expected there might be some resistance from instructors and from learners alike.

In what follows, I will first consider some of the literature related to teaching life skills competencies in adult literacy. I will then describe the two family literacy sites which were the target of this study, including sketches of the students and staff who participated. The results of the study are reported in two sections. First I provide an analysis of the interview data and second I describe the CASAS pre and posttesting results from this school year. From the data, I try to determine the efficacy of incorporating life-skills competencies into a culturally diverse family literacy program. What follows are students' and teachers' thoughts and feelings about targeting life skills competencies within their classes. In the last section, I reflect on the results of the qualitative and the quantitative findings and make recommendations for future action and related research.

Current Literature on Competency-Based Adult Literacy Instruction

Given the great diversity among adult literacy learners, it is not surprising that there are a variety of approaches used to teach adult literacy. Various philosophies undergird these different approaches. Fingeret (1992) outlines four: literacy as skills; literacy as tasks; literacy as social and cultural practices; and literacy as critical reflection and action. Those who understand literacy as skills, emphasize coding and encoding of text without regard to context. It is assumed that literacy is a set of discrete skills, which when mastered sequentially, automatically lead to proficient usage. The view of literacy as tasks contextualizes literacy around things people need to be able to do in life, such as read a bus schedule, fill out a job application, etc. It is assumed that successfully performing a task in the classroom will transfer over to real life. In other words, there is often no recognition that the situation can affect the nature of the task. However, those who perceive literacy as social and cultural practices recognize this difference. Respect for the import of cultural differences and social context is at the core of this view of literacy. As Fingeret notes, "we engage in literacy in a social setting, and we cannot separate the setting from our literacy behavior" (p. 6). Paulo Freire has influenced literacy education around the world, and his ideas are foundational in the US among those who understand literacy as critical reflection and action. These practitioners see literacy as the means to challenge notions of knowledge and the distribution of power in our community and in our society.

Of the four approaches outlined, my focus here is literacy as tasks. Tasks in literacy education are commonly referred to as competencies. Defined by the US Office of Education in 1978, competency-based education is "a performance-based process leading to demonstrated mastery of basic and life skills necessary for the individual to function proficiently in society" (Savage, 1991). Auerbach (1986) explains that this definition of competency-based adult education grew out of Northrup's (1977) *The Adult Performance Level Study* (APL) in which he examined the kinds of tasks most often performed by American adults. He then organized categories of behaviors needed to successfully perform these functions and tasks. The result was a compilation of sixty-five competencies and numerous added sub objectives, all categorized under five knowledge areas and four basic skills areas (p. 414). The five knowledge areas determined to be necessary to function in modem society include occupational, consumer, health, government and law, and community resources. The four skills needed include reading and writing, listening and speaking, problem solving and computation, and interpersonal relations (Savage, 1992). Auerbach (1986), in a critique of competency-based education with adult learners studying English as a second language (ESL), provides a helpful framework for her analysis of competency-based. I have extracted from Auerbach those points which I believe are also relevant to an ABE (Adult Basic Education) and GED population of adult learners.

According to Auerbach, competency-based education: 1) focuses on successful functioning in society; 2) focuses on life skills; 3) is performance- or task-based; 4) is negotiated between teacher and student with agreed upon outcomes made explicit; 5) involves continuous assessment of progress, i.e. pre and posttesting; and 6) is learner-centered and individualized. In addition, by design, a competency-based approach shows mastery of the learning objectives when a student demonstrates the ability to actually accomplish the task or function, rather than by taking a paper and pencil test. So, ideally the adult literacy teacher would create opportunities for the student to demonstrate mastery of a function or a task as part of instruction. However, two caveats should be noted. First, in order to comply with accountability to funders, students must be able to demonstrate successful performance on the paper and pencil CASAS test which attempts to emulate these life skills competencies. Second, as noted by some (Fingeret, 1992; Auerbach, 1986), when teachers draw these tasks from published materials, they can differ in significant ways from the authentic ones. I don't believe it necessarily follows that abstracted examples such as those from published materials or those recreated on a test prove anything about an adult's ability to perform in an authentic situation; the social and cultural setting will have an inherent effect. It is also quite possible that adults may be able to perform competencies outside the classroom fine, but have difficulty with the abstracted versions developed for teaching and testing.

Collins (1983) argues that a competency-based system draws its authority from a "false aura of exactness",by claiming to be able to reduce all skills to measurable outcomes, when in fact doing so is problematic (p. 175). Moreover, utilizing a competency-based approach which is not negotiated with adult learners and which ignores the social context can be, according to Collins,

> a purposeful attempt to define the teacher-learning situation according to a deterministic doctrine which does not adequately account for the motivational aspects of purposeful action (p. 178).

Thus, a competency-based curriculum is what Greene (1971) calls *curriculum as fact*, rather than *curriculum as practice* (cited in Auerbach, 1986). A competency-based model often reflects Freire's (1970) idea of the banking model of education. Auerbach (1986) first describes curriculum as fact.

> [T]here is a structure of socially prescribed knowledge to be mastered by students. Here the function of education is to socialize learners according to the values of the dominant socioeconomic group. The teacher's job is to devise more and more effective ways to transmit skills.... In curriculum as practice, the focus shifts from how students can absorb and replicate knowledge to how they can synthesize and generate knowledge... Knowledge becomes what is accomplished in the collaborative work between students and teachers (pp. 416-7).

It seems clear that education with adults is most effective when tied directly to real needs identified by adult learners. Shirley Edwards, Coordinator of Teamster Local 137's Workplace Literacy Program, reflects on what this means for adult learners and their teachers.

> Student-centeredness implies that in a classroom power is shared, based on common understanding that students, as well as the teacher, bring with them goals and objectives for learning, as well as prior knowledge and experience essential to learning new things. Goals and objectives are then negotiated in the classroom; prior knowledge is invited and validated. Topics to be covered, tasks to be accomplished, and methodology to be used emerge from these negotiations. (Consortium for Worker Education and Institute for Literacy Studies, 1987, p. 7 cited in Collins et. al, 1989)

As ideal as this may sound, there are often tensions between such a learner-centered approach and accountability to funders.

Was it possible, as a family literacy program, to use the results of the CASAS to assist the learners in our classes to articulate their needs and goals? Or were the CASAS competencies unrelated to student goals? I wondered if students might be interested in expanding their learning opportunities outside of the realm of the academic GED textbooks to include certain competencies. These questions became an integral focus of my study. From the outset of this project, I had determined at least two criteria for success. My first goal was that, as a result of successfully targeting competencies for instruction, students would show enough gains on the CASAS to meet the state standard. The second less tangible result would be that our program staff would grow in understanding the issues around using a competency-based assessment instrument.

Problem Statement of measurable outcome: Will integrating instruction on competencies identified as needed by the life skills CASAS pretest of learners in family literacy program improve post test results for individual learners and for the program overall to the level of the PDE program performance standard over three month period?

IV. ACTION

The Two Family Literacy Sites

Washington Elementary is situated in a predominantly Hispanic residential neighborhood. The class has twenty-five students on the roles. There is one Vietnamese male, one white male, one Puerto Rican male, one African American female, and all the rest are Puerto Rican females. Among the Puerto Rican group about half are bilingual since they have lived in the US for a number of years; most of them attended school in both Puerto Rico and the US. The other Puerto Rican students enrolled in the program in order to learn English. This class is made up of about half ESL students and half ABE/GED students. Among both groups are students with very low literacy in both English and Spanish. Most of the students who speak English tested below the fifth grade level in reading and math. Most of the ESOL group had little or no ability in English, with the exception of a couple of students.

As of the beginning of April, sixteen of the twenty-five students had accumulated fifty or more hours for the year, all of them female. Nine of that number had accumulated over 100 hours, and five had accumulated over 200 hours. The average attendance is around seven or eight students per day for the morning class, and for the afternoon class the average is three students. There is a commitment with the public assistance office to provide class for students who must meet welfare requirements. However, the afternoon schedule is available to all the students. The majority of the time there is only one teacher who must address the needs of a very diverse group of learners; however, two mornings per week there is a volunteer tutor to assist the teacher.

The Head Start Family Advocacy Center is located in the center of Lancaster in a mixed residential and industrial area. There are twenty-eight students on the role for the year. The average attendance per day is seven or eight students. As of the beginning of April, eighteen students had accumulated over fifty hours of instruction for the year. Eleven had accumulated over 100 hours, and three of that number had accumulated over 200 hours. There is only one male student on the list, and he had only nine hours for the year. Among the twenty-seven women, five are African American, one is Filipino, five are White, and sixteen are Hispanic. All the students in this class are studying for their GED in English except for one student who has been studying for the GED in Spanish. There are no ESOL students in this group. At registration these students tested at wide ranges from third grade to ninth and tenth grade. Most were in the ABE range between fifth and eighth grade. This year seven students in this class have passed all five sections of the GED test. Several others have passed parts of the test.

The GED instruction in our family literacy program is methodical and individualized and is focused mainly on the GED textbooks. However, the students sometimes work with a partner or in a small group to help each other, too. There is a often a hum of chatter as students who choose to work together talk about the GED textbook exercises as well as share personal conversation. Some of the students have formed important friendships with one another and have developed a vital and supportive learning community. The teachers sometimes organize lessons around job skills, current events, or literature. They also sometimes read and discuss articles from *Parent and Child* magazine. Both family literacy classes take seven or eight field trips each year including trips to the library, to a farm, and to the computer lab for training. Some of these trips are with parents and children together. The Parent and Child Together time (PACT) is planned as part of the class every two weeks and often includes parent education. During PAST time, parents join their children in the early childhood classroom to sing, read stories, and do art projects.

The Instructors and the Adult Learners

For this project, I interviewed four family literacy teachers and eight students. I have used fictitious names for all participants. The interviews were from approximately forty to ninety minutes in length. The study focuses on ABE/GED students. None of the eight students I interviewed is studying English as a second language, though several are bilingual. Among the eight students one is African American, one is Filipino, one is White and five are Latina, all from Puerto Rico. Most are in their early to mid twenties, but a couple are in their thirties. All are parents since in order to participate in Even Start, students must have a child seven years old or younger.

Terry teaches at the Head Start Family Advocacy Center site. Terry has ten years of experience in preparing students for the GED. She has a strong track record of success in assisting students to achieve this goal. She has been teaching with Even Start for several years, and is our main teacher trainer. The family literacy class at the Head Start Center is seen as a model. New teachers observe Terry's class and receive a significant part of their orientation and training from her. Terry teaches Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM, and Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 12:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Pat is in her second year at Washington Elementary, and she is currently teaching Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM. Shelly was hired this fall to teach the afternoon schedule at Washington on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11:30 AM to 3:30 PM. Ben is a new teacher who has helped us to start up a new family literacy class in Lancaster at the Carter and McRae Elementary School. He teaches Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings.

Four of the students I interviewed attend classes at the the Head Start site and four students attend classes at the Washington site. From the Head Start site I interviewed Beth, Denise, Linda and Maria, all of whom have either almost or more than 200 hours of instruction for the year. Maria passed her GED test in March. The others have passed portions of their test. Denise and Maria have been in the program for two years, and Linda has been studying with Terry for four years. From the Washington site, I interviewed Donna, Evelyn, Jan and Val. Jan is a fairly new student who started attending classes in March. Donna, Evelyn and Val have accumulated over 100 hours of instruction this year. Donna and Evelyn have passed some of their sub tests for the GED. Val did not earn a passing score on the test she took in March which was her first attempt.

V. RESULTS

The Interview Data: Teachers' Perceptions of the CASAS Competencies

I asked the family literacy instructors to talk about their impressions of the CASAS and their experience in using it. All the teachers expressed the view that addressing competencies in a family literacy class is appropriate, though Pat admitted that initially she thought it might be insulting to the students. The most experienced teacher in the group, Terry, responded without hesitation that CASAS does not measure learning gains and that it does not help her determine a student's beginning reading level. Reiterating her need to know a student's reading level, Terry stated, "I can tell you that the 240s is a good CASAS score, but I still don't know where to start someone in reading. I can be sure with the TABE." Terry noted that the grade level equivalency chart provided by CASAS has not been helpful. She commented that the levels seem to her to be too high.

Since the teachers are so focused on the students' goals to get the GED, they use primarily GED preparation textbooks which are available at two levels: the GED level for those reading at the ninth grade level or higher and the Pre-GED level for those reading between a fifth and a ninth grade level. For adult learners below the fifth grade reading level teachers have other texts available, most of which are skills-based. It is critical to Terry to start the students in the right textbook. The other three teachers did not mention this concern, but Ben expressed some of the same concerns about CASAS not showing gains. Ben asked, "Why is this the only instrument we use in our program if the GED is part of the goal. It's not so useful if the GED is the goal." Ben's comment implies that for some students, i.e. those who have mastered the competencies, a competency-based approach is inappropriate. Ben had a student this year who scored very high on her CASAS pretest making it difficult to show measurable gains on the posttest. Ironically, this student actually showed a ten point loss on her posttest. Ben talked about how the student was probably motivated to prove to herself what she could do when she first entered the program. However, when she took the posttest she had less to prove since she had already passed three sub tests for the GED; therefore, she may have been less motivated to perform well on CASAS. Terry also mentioned this low motivation factor for students at the end of the year, especially for those who have passed the GED.

All four teachers agreed that addressing competencies in their classes is needed. The problem for Terry is finding the time to locate or create competency-based lessons. Ben also mentioned that not having a set curriculum makes it harder, even though he has found some useful teaching ideas in the CASAS curriculum. Terry also indicated that some students might resist if too much emphasis were placed on competencies instead of the GED. Stating her desire to change her thinking on this, Terry said she recognizes the need to focus on competencies, but at the same time she is unsure of how students would feel about this kind of instruction. She noted that the students in her class have the option to participate in the CPR class and in the nutrition class during the year, both of which address some of the competencies outlined in CASAS. In the nutrition class, for instance, students learn how to read food labels. Terry stated that she would be more comfortable teaching mini lessons on competencies which were complete unto themselves rather than trying to tie competencies into GED instruction. For Ben integrating competencies into the curriculum would not be difficult if there were not so many other challenges in the classroom, the main one being the diversity of learners in the same class, i.e. people at diverse learning levels and ESOL and ABE/GED in the same class. Ben stated that it is far easier to individualize instruction for the GED students by having them work independently in the GED textbooks. At a family literacy conference last fall, Ben heard one of the trainers talk about getting the students "out of the textbooks." While Ben recognizes the benefits of getting the students out of their workbooks, he questioned, "How do you get everyone out of the book when there are so many walls. The more diverse, the harder it is." Ben noted that most teachers assume that the only way to deal with such diversity is to individualize.

For Shelly and Pat, integrating competencies seemed to be somewhat natural. They are using the competency profile charts for individual students and for the class, and they are both aware of which competencies to focus on, particularly in planning instruction for the ESOL group. Focusing on competencies with the GED students seems to be more through happenstance than by design. As Shelly put it, competencies often come up in conversation with students in class, such as when students want to study for their driver's license or request help in filling out forms or in understanding correspondence from the school. Shelly mentioned one student who is highly motivated to understand the frequent correspondence she receives from the school regarding her child who is enrolled in special education. Another way Pat and Shelly have been intentional about addressing competencies is by using the newspaper in class. Shelly commented on the students interest in the newspaper.

> For some of them they're interested in... some of them have started buying newspapers. They're interested in the news. If we bring 'em in, they pull them open immediately. And I think that's because we are reading in class; we talk with them about current events. And they're very interested in that. It's a different world. They're not used to even looking at the world outside of Lancaster, not even just Lancaster, but their little section of Lancaster.

In addition, it seems that both Pat and Shelly, look for opportunities to integrate the life skills competencies into the GED curriculum. Since they are aware that many students have trouble understanding charts, maps, tables, and graphs as well as diagrams, advertisements and food labels, these instructors seek to focus particular attention to these if and when they come up in the GED textbook. The Science and Social Studies texts often ask students to extract data which is organized in these ways. Shelly mentioned working with a learner on reading an analog clock, and they both talked about personalizing the GED materials in ways that address competencies. Pat described an excerpt from Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in the Literature and Arts text which students typically have trouble with because it is written in dialect. Pat uses the text as a springboard to discuss how language works. She explains to the student that while everyone uses slang, we all need to learn when and how to use our language appropriately. From there she leads the student into a discussion of using language effectively when interviewing for a job, which is one of the CASAS competencies.

Pat described another lesson which focused on reading a map. She acknowledged that an abstract map in a textbook is of limited value in teaching. Instead she personalizes the lesson by having the students look at a map of Lancaster. First they try to find the school on the map. After studying the directions and the symbols, they took the map with them on their trip to the library. This gave the learners the opportunity to see that giving directions for driving, because of the one-way streets, would have to be different than for walking. Both reading a map and giving and following directions (particularly relevant for ESOL) are CASAS competencies.

When asked if a competency-based curriculum would in any way limit the learners we serve, Shelly was quick to state that she believes that just the opposite is true. In other words, not assisting learners with certain competencies could limit their potential to succeed. She illustrated this point by telling a story about a student who did not realize that meat requires refrigeration. Pat also insisted that competencies are appropriate for all learners at all levels. She laughed when I suggested that some people might feel that competency-based instruction is more appropriate for lower level learners and remarked, “Well, I know graduate students who don’t know how to load a camera!”

The Interview Data: The Learners’ Perceptions of the CASAS Competencies

The students and I together looked over Level C Form 35, which is the third highest level test in the life skills CASAS series, and read the list of competencies being assessed. The competencies targeted on this particular test include interpreting housing ads, reading a map, identifying regulations and procedures to get a driver’s license, interpreting job applications, interpreting information found in newspapers, periodicals, business letters, pamphlets, and publications, and fourteen more. I asked the students for their impressions of the test and whether or not they thought these things were important for people to be able to do. All the students acknowledged that the test covered ordinary, everyday activities. All agreed that most or all of the competencies on the list were important for people to be able to do.

We talked about how most of the CASAS test questions, even though they require reading and answering multiple-choice questions, are quite different from those on the GED test. Some things might be similar to the GED, but much of it is different. I told the students that I was interested to know whether they thought the teacher should focus on these things in the class if the CASAS test result suggested that people in the class didn't know some of these things. I asked them how they would feel about it if their teacher took time in class to address some of these competencies, especially since they don't have much to do with the GED.

I was somewhat surprised that seven out of the eight students I interviewed thought it would be good for their teacher to focus on some of these competencies in class. I expected the students to say either that they already knew these things or that they could learn these things on their own, if and when they needed to learn them. I thought the students would say that they would prefer to stay focused on their GED studies in class. There was only one student who said she would study competencies only if they were related to the GED. Revealing her sense that she and her classmates have a right to some ownership in curriculum decisions, this same learner suggested that students should feel free to talk to the teacher about any lesson they don't consider to be relevant. She would say to the teacher, "Some of the lessons that you're giving comes out of the [GED] test, but why we gotta study what you're teaching if we're not gonna get it on the [GED] test, and it's not very important to study that?"

Here are some of the other students' responses:

> They should appear in the stuff in school. These are stuff that you use like most of the time, you know, in your life. There's a lot of people going for the license, you know, and they should know the regulations and stuff.... Like I don't know how to read a map. When I travel, not that I travel, but in an emergency when I travel, I don't know how to use a map. (Val)

> I would think that regardless of whether it appear on the GED test at least you would have the knowledge of knowing when you go in the grocery store of how to read a label and what you can get out of it. Like does it have fat in it or whatever? 'Cause that's what you learn on the labels. Or how much calcium is in it? (Linda)

> It's probably best that you don't just focus on one thing like I'm doing now [with math]. I would like to know what's going on. Like this kind of thing on the chart. Because I

> don't know especially this map reading and travel needs. One time me and my husband went somewhere and he gave me the map, and [laughs] we got lost and he got so mad at me because I ... [laughs] I think this is a good example, you know, not just the GED thing. It's not just the GED thing you are trying to get. (Denise)

> I was just gonna say if they are gonna use this test to see what skills we have, don't just do that. Okay. Don't just say here's the test. Go take it. I need to see what level you're on. Teach us the stuff that we're not on level with.... What your focus is when you try to get your GED is to... improving skills and gaining more knowledge and this is all stuff that is gaining more knowledge and improving skills. [reading from the list of competencies] Comparing price and quality to determine the best buys for goods and services... this one I can really see.... Recognizes problems related to drugs, tobacco, and alcohol and identify where treatment may be obtained. (Maria)

> I think it's important [to include competencies in the class]. Because I get tired of them, taking test after test after test. (Donna)

> I think probably both is good to, you know, focus on this, but then the ones, you know, like us trying to study for the GED it will take time out. I think it's a good idea to focus on this. I think I'd put my spare time into the class to do it. (Jan)

> I like to learn a lot. I like to... personally I like to study all these different kinds of stuff. If I could learn more about other stuff, I would, you know. For me, I think it's good. (Evelyn)

What to make of these comments? Many adult education practitioners conduct a needs assessment with new students as part of their orientation. This often includes a list of topics or competencies to focus on for instruction. It is common for adult learners to say that they are interested in learning many or most of the items on the list. The students in this study may have been responding similarly. Even though I tried to make it clear that I wanted their honest impressions and opinions about these competencies, I have wondered if the students may have been responding to me as an authority figure who was offering a suggestion to them. Perhaps they wanted to give me the response they thought I was expecting. In addition, since it is a common assumption that a test administered in school must measure things of substance, it would be natural for the students to think that the list of competencies represents things that people should know. They may have responded out of this assumption, not wanting to appear uninterested in things so-called literate people know and do every day. I found it interesting that Maria questioned the rationale for having to take the CASAS test if the test in no way informs instruction; as this student implies, doing so is nothing more than busy work.

On the other hand, I would like to believe that these students have a sense of what information would be helpful to them and that they responded candidly. I'd like to believe that they are strong enough people not to be influenced to say that they would like to learn how to read maps if they really have no interest whatsoever in doing so. There is a clear theme running through several of the responses that suggests that these learners have an interest in and a desire to learn many things, besides the GED. Furthermore, it seems that balancing GED study with other kinds of lessons would, for some of these learners, help alleviate the tediousness of completing GED workbook exercises and practice tests.

The CASAS Testing Data for 1998-99

The CASAS pre and posttesting data I have collected to date for this year indicates that we did not meet the three point average gain set by the state. For several years, there has been a steady decline in the number of matched pre and post test pairs for CASAS since teachers have preferred using other testing instruments which show gains more reliably. In the 1995-96 school year, there were sixteen pairs with an average gain of 1.37; in the 1996-97 school year, there were only nine matching pairs with an average gain of 1.22; and in the 1997-98 school year there were only four pre and post tests for CASAS with an average gain of 2.0. This year, I have collected from the two sites involved in the study nine matching pairs to date with a gain of only 1.33. Once again, there are students among this group who have shown significant gains on the TABE and have passed subtests of the GED.

The interview data shows that issues remain for our teachers. It is difficult for some teachers to integrate competencies into GED instruction. At least one teacher prefers to teach competencies as completely separate lessons. Even for teachers who find integrating competencies to be rather natural, there is no systematic approach to addressing the competencies for the ABE/GED students. Addressing competencies through happenstance does not seem to yield a positive result on the CASAS. Even so, I cannot conclude that addressing competencies in a disciplined manner would yield positive test results since the teachers involved in the study did not do so. I believe that teachers may have benefited from more discussion and a clearly articulated plan for how to address competencies in the classroom. The CASAS diagnostic profile and curriculum, though useful, did not offer enough guidance and specific teaching strategies for use in these teachers' multi-level classrooms. Beyond this, is the uncertainty felt by some teachers about the appropriateness of addressing competencies with certain learners. I infer from both the interview data and the CASAS test results that incorporating competencies may be appropriate for some learners but not for all. There are students every year who gain a very high score on the CASAS pretest. For this group of students, focusing on competencies would seem inappropriate. Notwithstanding, I believe there are larger questions which need to be pursued by our staff regarding the question of addressing both our accountability requirements as a program and the instructional needs of our students. At the heart of the issue is curriculum design.

VI. REFLECTION

I am keenly aware of the implications of limiting the choices of learners through a competency-based curriculum. As Payne (1988) points out, the socio-cultural hierarchy is maintained by the different options made available to people.

> Working-class people have their decisions shaped by material reality. If education really did offer us all the same chances, how would the social relations of exploiter and exploited be reproduced? Attitudes to education are part of a whole structure of relationships to society, which have their roots in real material divisions (13).

A competency-based curriculum is not offered to everyone. What kinds of learners are provided an educational curriculum such as this? Certainly not those preparing for higher education where the emphasis is on developing cognitive skills rather than on behavior and performance. Much of the content of competencies for the workplace emphasizes preparing people for the lowest level jobs. However there is an irony, as noted by Auerbach (1986). because to be effective in the workplace requires the ability to think critically. According to Klemp (1979), three skills are most important at work for all but the lowest skilled job: "the ability to organize diverse information, the ability to see many sides of a complex issue, and the ability to learn from and apply experience in a new situation" (cited in Auerbach, 1986, p. 419). How does an emphasis on competencies prepare individuals for a job which requires these skills? Moreover, by taking time to focus on competencies, how much time remains to teach the skills adult learners need to understand and learn the cultural codes of power (e.g. standard English) needed to succeed in this society (Delpit, 1988).

Regarding the use of CASAS competencies in the Lancaster Even Start family literacy program, I would like to leave aside the point that the list of CASAS competencies is not generated by the adult learners in our class nor do the competencies necessarily reflect the interests or goals of our learners. A competency-based approach actually presupposes that instruction is based on the needs of the learners. Then, upon consideration of the results of the paper and pencil test, teachers and learners decide together which competencies to target for instruction. It is important to recognize that the individualized nature of the CASAS system may undermine the sustenance of a learning community and may also be culturally contrary to what learners are accustomed to if approached as individual learning goals. Even so, I can imagine a curriculum in family literacy which is -- at least in part -- co-constructed with the teacher and the learners together leading to a suitable emphasis on certain competencies.

With our family literacy group, for instance, it might be worthwhile to have a conversation with the students about their interest in studying maps. If the students were so inclined, the teacher could invite the adult learners to help design the lesson by drawing maps of their neighborhoods or bringing maps to class that they would like to learn about. Students who already know how to read maps might be interested in helping to teach the lesson, perhaps through accessing information on the internet. Mapquest, for instance, is an interesting website where visitors can access street maps and get directions from cities all around the world. During the unit, it would also be important to point out what kind of map reading is needed for the GED.

Such a participatory curriculum design (see Auerbach, 1990; Morgan, 1998; and Wrigley & Guth, 1992) requires much flexibility on the part of the teacher, and it won't guarantee gains on the competency-based assessment. However, if students and teachers agree that an emphasis on competencies is worthwhile, and they negotiate together on which competencies are interesting and relevant, we can work at maintaining a learner-centered focus in instruction, address accountability issues, and find ways to effectively demonstrate learning gains. Being account able, first, to the adult learners in their classrooms is at the heart of our goal.

A fruitful course for our family literacy staff would be to form a teacher research group to consider this issue in depth. It would be worthwhile to discuss the results of this study and to talk together about what it means to address competencies in our learner-centered family literacy program and what it means to contextualize learning, particularly with adult learners studying for the GED. If we decide that it is important to address life skills competencies in our classrooms, having the opportunity to consider some effective means for intentionally and systematically doing so will be critical. Working together, may result in our designing and implementing an intervention for another round of action research. Further research could also lead to our discovering innovative ways to effectively capture multiple dimensions of learning.

Works Cited:

Auerbach, E. R. (1986). Competency-based ESL: One step forward or two steps back? *TESOL Quarterly*, 20(3), 411-429.

Auerbach, E. R. (1989). Toward a social-contextual approach to family literacy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 59(2), 165-181.

Auerbach, E. R. (1990). *Making meaning, making change: Participatory curriculum development for adult ESL Literacy*. McHenry, IL: Delta Systems.

Collins, M. (1983). A critical analysis of competency-based systems in adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 33(3), 174-183.

Collins, M., Balmuth, S. D. & Jean, P. (1989). So we can use our own names and write the laws by which we live: Educating the new U.S. labor force. *Harvard Educational Review*, 59(4), 454-469.

Delpit, L.D. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(3), 280-298.

Fingeret, H. A. (1992). *Adult Literacy Education: Current and Future Directions: An Update*. Information Series No. 355. Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Ohio State Univ.

Freire, P. (1970). The adult literacy process as cultural action for freedom. *Harvard Educational Review*, 40(2), 205-225.

Morgan, B. D. (1998). *The ESL classroom: Teaching, critical practice, and community development*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Payne, I. (1988). A working class girl in a grammar school. In *Learning to lose: Sexism and education*. D. Spender & E. Sarah (Eds.), pp. 12-19.

Savage, K. L. (1996). Literacy through a CBE (competency-based) approach. In J. A. Crandall (Ed.), *Approaches to adult ESL literacy instruction*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents/ Center for Applied Linguistics.

Wrigley, H. & Guth, G. (1992). *Bringing literacy to life: Issues and options in adult ESL literacy.* San Diego, CA: Dominie Press.

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Integrating Professional Teaching Staff Into a Volunteer-Based Agency

Action Researcher's Name:

Karen Mundie

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

Problem statement: Will adding monthly meetings for professional teaching staff and providing opportunities for interaction with other GPLC staff result in a teaching staff more integrated into the agency and more supportive of each other?

Population: teachers

Baseline: Teachers work in isolation from the rest of the staff and often from each other. They have not been closely involved in the kind of team planning that is most common in our agency -- so little of their expertise is transmitted. Nor do they have easy access to the many years of experience in adult education that characterizes our main office staff.

Intervention: Teachers met together four times. The meetings took place in 1999 on February 19, March 19, April 23, and May 21. They discussed common issues,problem-solved, and share teaching methods. All were scheduled to attend professional development activities, at least one as a group.

Data collection strategies: Personal interviews at a scheduled evaluation and a questionnaire given orally six months later.

Results: All four of the teachers valued the teachers meetings enough to continue them for the next contract year. All valued having an understanding audience for brainstorming and general commiseration. Three found time for additional professional development activities which allowed for interaction with GPLC staff and other literacy professionals. Three felt less isolated and two felt much more integrated in the agency.

II. PROBLEM

Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council (GPLC) is a volunteer-based literacy council. It provides adult literacy, family literacy, English as a Second Language, workplace, and adult basic education services to the least educated and most in need citizens of the Greater Pittsburgh area. Although many of our students give the GED as their long term goal, few are at the "GED Level" (9th to 12 grade) when they enter the program. Most enter at the intermediate ABE (5th to 8th grade) level. Last year about 35% entered at the literacy (0-4) level.

When GPLC was founded in 1976, it was an all-volunteer agency. Since 1982, when it outgrew its all-volunteer structure, it has expanded to employ a staff of thirty with an annual student base of about 1400. Administrative functions and some classes are housed at our main office in East Liberty, an inner-city neighborhood. Nine neighborhood or community offices are scattered throughout the county. These are staffed by area coordinators who generally work alone in small offices. However, they meet with each other monthly and with the whole staff at staff meetings. The first staff meeting of the month is mandatory for them; the second is optional depending on the subject matter. They are also involved in many committees and many teams.

Our service area is chiefly urban or suburban. Though some classes are taught by staff professionals, volunteers continue to serve the great majority of our students. About 350 new volunteers are trained each year with 500 active at any point in time. Most of our professional staff is involved in recruiting, training, and supporting the students and tutors in the volunteer-based program. A few are responsible for managing special projects which are separate from our base program. In the group of support people for our education program, many do teach students, but not as their primary responsibility. On average, those who teach do so about four hours a week often in workplace programs or special projects.

As the program director of GPLC, I am responsible for the direction and quality of GPLC's programming including on-going improvement initiatives. I am also responsible for the hiring and direct supervision of about half of the staff. I am responsible for most of the other "program people" indirectly.

The number of professionals who primarily teach rather than coordinate or support volunteers has increased recently. In 1992 only one staff member was assigned as a full time teacher. This class was taught at our main office, and we had daily contact with this teacher. She was very integrated into the life of the agency and was involved in many special projects with other staff members. Both the original teacher of the class and her successor were promoted to management positions within the organization. In 1995 we added another teacher, but her class was at a remote location; in 1996 we added one more; in 1997-98 our in-house class was moved to an off-site location, and we added a second teacher for this class. We now have four professional staff who are full-time teachers -- mostly at remote locations. We expect to add at least one other teacher in 1999-2000.

Most of these teachers are unable to come to staff meetings because they have teaching responsibilities at staff meeting times. They work in isolation from the rest of the staff and often from each other. They have not been closely involved in the kind of team planning that is most common in our agency -- so little of their expertise is transmitted. Nor do they have easy access to the many years of experience in adult education that characterizes our main office staff. Staff development for these teachers is sporadic at best.

We still behave as an all volunteer agency, just an unusually large and "sophisticated" one, and we simply haven't adjusted to having professional staff who primarily teach and whose schedules are therefore less flexible than those of our administrative or coordinating staff.

I felt as I began this project that if our teachers became more of a team themselves in the way our area coordinators are and, as a group, more a part of our overall team, we would be an agency with a common approach and a common mission, and steadily growing expertise. As it is, some of the teachers don't really understand what the rest of the agency does. We have gotten into a situation where we have excellent teachers who could be doing in-services for our coordinating staff and our tutors (taking some pressure off of our specialist positions) but who have no contact with this part of the program. We also as an agency emphasize professional development for our volunteer support staff and we provide little (and demand little) of our teaching staff. Certainly we have made no attempt to identify or develop any base line approach or skills for the teaching staff.

What is the significance?

If the teachers had a network in which they supported and informed each other, participated in professional activities appropriate to them as a group and as individuals, and had a representative to the rest of the staff, my own job would be easier because I would feel that this part of the agency was growing in a planned and reasonable fashion, not like Topsy ---where teachers are hired as needed, briefly oriented and then thrown out into the field and, if not forgotten, largely ignored -- until a problem develops.

III. PLANNING

In December of every year I have an meeting with all staff that report to me directly. These meetings have two purposes. The first part of the meeting is a formal work evaluation for the previous year, and an overall rating is given. Since all of our raises are based on merit, this part of the meeting is very important. The second part of the meeting is more informal. The idea is simply to touch base, to see if the employee has any issues that need to be discussed. It's an opportunity to check in on big things like general job satisfaction or changes that the employee thinks would benefit our systems. It is also an opportunity for employees to mention smaller problems or needs that have arisen in the course of work. These meetings can last from one to two hours.

This year (December 1998) I asked the teaching staff if they would be willing to participate in my research project by setting up at least four teachers' meetings and by attending the Math as Problem Solving Module which I would schedule at our main office. Most of the attendees would be GPLC employees but it was to be open for teachers from other agencies.

As a baseline I asked each of the teachers these questions:

1. Do you feel you understand the functions of most of the staff by name and job description?
2. Do you feel you are aware of what's going on at GPLC -- i.e. special projects and professional development opportunities?
3. How many professional development activities did you attend last year?
4. How connected do you feel with GPLC and its staff?
5. Who supports you in your work?

Teacher One works in two sites: with a SPOC class downtown four mornings a week and with an ABE/GED class in the main office four afternoons a week. Teacher two works only with the SPOC class. Two of the teachers are family literacy teachers who work at different sites (Teachers 3 and 4). They meet occasionally when they bring their students together for special projects or events, and they speak occasionally on the phone.

The first question brought various replies. Teacher One teacher said, "There are a few whose jobs I don't understand. Sometimes I sort of know what the job is, but not the person at all or vice versa." Teacher Two said simply, "No." Three said, "Only those I work with like the reading specialist and the receptionist." The fourth felt that he understood the job functions very well and had interacted with most of the main office staff and some coordinators.

Question 2: All of the teachers felt out of the loop to some extent and were concerned about information flow and timely awareness of professional development opportunities. As for special projects, Teacher One was aware of ALMA and Literacy Centers. Two is on the program improvement team so has some understanding of EQUAL and what is going in that team. However, she was almost completely unaware of other special projects such as AIM, ALMA, What Works, and the Crossroads project. Teacher Three had virtually no contact with other aspects of GPLC and very limited information. Teacher Four was involved in the Student Fellowship Group and Literacy Centers and so had that connection. The SPOC teachers and the family literacy teachers knew very little about each other's classes and had met each other only in passing.

Question 3: The teachers had engaged in very few professional development activities in 1998. Teacher One attended an institute for new teachers. Teacher Two had attended the Case Management Module as part of program improvement team activities. Teacher Three attended a two and a half day advanced training course in Louisville designed for family literacy teachers. Teacher four, who has been on staff the longest, attended two conferences. They averaged about 18 hours of professional development time, much below the 45 hour average for the rest of the staff.

Question 4: Teacher One works with Teacher Two for some hours everyday. They have become a team, and a support for each other. Teacher One feels fairly connected because she works a few hours in the main office four days a week. Teacher Two really only connects through the program improvement team, and that just since September. She had been into the office only three times in eight months, and had no other interaction with staff. She thought everyone was very nice, but they were very "undifferentiated" to her. She was very aware of the mission of the agency, however, and it is what attracted her to her current job. Teacher Three is in much the same position. She has come into the office rarely, and when she does it is on Friday afternoons when few people are there. She also mentioned that because her population is so difficult, handling their problems and instruction is a "lonely" job, but she added that she relished the challenge and the difference she could make. Teacher four felt the same way, but seemed more demoralized. The difficulties were not, for him, balanced by enough tangible rewards--in changes in student behavior or in student progress.

Question 5: All four of the teachers mentioned (tactfully) support by their supervisor. The SPOC teachers (Teachers 1 &2) mentioned each other. Teacher three mentioned her AmeriCorps members. Teacher Four mentioned a colleague from another agency who works with him one or two days a week.

All of the teachers expressed an unreserved willingness to attend the meetings. I told staff that I did not wish to be prescriptive about what happened at their teachers' meetings, but I asked that they use the meetings to share information and expertise, and perhaps decide on professional development activities for the group. I had originally intended that the teachers attend staff meetings on a rotating basis, but this proved too difficult to schedule. One of the four did attend the first staff meetings of the month from January through May.

I asked that they attend the Math as Problem Solving Module because I wanted them to have some training in common in an area where no one considered himself or herself an expert. I thought that this would give the teachers another opportunity to interact, but in a setting in which they were learning new material together rather than sharing.

The teachers backgrounds are very different. One has a doctoral degree in English education with close to twenty years of teaching experience in high school and college; one has a masters in adult education and about a year and a half of teaching experience; one is a master's candidate in adult education with a good deal of practical experience; one has a bachelor's degree in elementary education with less than three years of adult education experience. None are math specialists and it is an area where they all could easily admit that professional development was needed.

The criteria for success for this project is a simple one arising from the perceived problem. If the intervention is successful, most of the teachers (i.e. 3 out of 4) will indicate on the post survey that they feel more fully integrated into the agency, have shared expertise more, have found common ground for professional development, and now perceive a collegial support network where little or none existed before.

There were no outside approvals necessary to set up these meeting. I have the power within my own job description and program responsibilities to conduct this project. The only constraints were in scheduling time for meetings that would not take the teachers away from their work at crucial times. I left this scheduling entirely in the hands of the teachers. They met twice in our main office, and twice at restaurants downtown (a central location for them) for lunch meetings.

A brief restatement of the problem: Will adding monthly meetings for professional teaching staff and providing opportunities for interaction with other GPLC staff result in a teaching staff more integrated into the agency and more supportive of each other?

IV. ACTION

One of the teachers was made responsible for scheduling the meetings and for keeping informal notes about discussions and activities within the meetings. The meetings took place in 1999 on February 19, March 19, April 23, and May 21.

The first meeting was at the main office and was spent in getting to know each other. The teacher of the downtown class had never really spoken to the two family literacy teachers and knew very little about their program. The teacher who works with her had met both of the family literacy teachers, but knew little about their work or the challenges they faced. They discussed recruitment problems in the family literacy program and retention problems in both programs. Since both programs work with outside case managers, they discussed issues they had in common such as disagreements between the teachers and case workers/managers about the best course for individual students.

The second meeting was also at the main office and the discussion centered around the need for more up-to-date computers to support instruction particularly at the SPOC site. Although both the SPOC students and the family literacy students use the GPLC Computer Center, the SPOC teachers and the family literacy teachers felt strongly that students should be able to practice what they learn at the Computer Center in their own classrooms. One of the family literacy teachers had several newish PC's and a power McIntosh which he used extensively -- so he strongly supported the other teachers position. They again discussed recruitment especially for the main office GED class. One of the family literacy teachers had briefly been a coordinator so he suggested ways that she could get a better response from the coordinators who are responsible for referring students to her class. The family literacy classes take a long (eight week) break in the summer, and the other two teachers indicated that all full time teachers need a break greater than the standard two week vacation.

The third and fourth meetings took place in restaurants at lunch time. The third meeting returned to the issue of recruitment. The SPOC teachers mentioned that they felt very lucky to have mandated students so that recruitment was someone else's problem. Once a student entered a SPOC program they were not allowed to simply leave. If their students were often absent, they were sanctioned by SPOC and by the welfare department. The teacher of the less successful of the two family literacy program discussed "the negative atmosphere" at his site.

In April and May the teachers and the administrator were scheduled to attend the Math as Problem Solving Module together. One of the teachers was ill and unable to attend either session, and the administrator became ill and missed the second session. Three teachers completed the module. There were several other GPLC staff and AmeriCorps members taking the module as well as literacy professionals from other agencies. It was an opportunity for us to work together in a collegial way and provided an opportunity for the teachers to come into the main office for training. It was also fun and required out of the box thinking for all of us no matter what our level of experience. We were able to laugh with, and maybe at, each other a bit. For Teacher Two, it was a rare opportunity to spend time in the main office and to get know some of the staff and to get a sense of the working atmosphere of the office. The module was scheduled for a Friday morning; planning time for two of the teachers; students of the other teachers went to the Computer Center.

The fourth and final meeting centered around the future of the group and whether they wished to continue meeting. They decided to resume meeting in the fall and continue on a monthly or possibly bimonthly basis. One of the family literacy teachers who is very entrepreneurial spent some time explaining and getting feed back on a proposal that she had written to start a neighborhood afterschool program that would also offer services to parents. Apparently there was some discussion of salary concerns along the lines of, "This is such a great place to work; too bad it doesn't pay better."

V. RESULTS

At the end of the cycle of meetings, I reinterviewed the four teachers. Two were interviewed face to face, and two were interviewed by phone. The same questions were asked of all four.

1. What is your usual way of getting information about what is happening at GPLC?

The three teachers who do not attend staff meetings all listed staff meeting minutes as their best means of current information. None suggested that they were getting information about GPLC activities in greater detail because one of them attended staff meetings--perhaps because their meetings do not closely parallel staff meetings. One suggested that minutes with date-sensitive information should be mailed to staff who aren't able to come to meetings or to pick up mail often. (This staff person and her students had very nearly missed our annual awards luncheon.)

Other responses were: asking when I need information, interaction with other staff, newsletters, and memos. None of the them mentioned the teachers' meetings specifically as a new way of getting information; however, three sited "interaction" as a good means of getting information.

2. Which GPLC staff members do you communicate with most regularly?

This produced a wide variety of answers. The two SPOC teachers who work together four mornings a week listed each other first. The one who has no "main office time" listed in addition only her supervisor and the office receptionist. The other listed the education specialist who assigns JTPA students to her afternoon class, two area coordinators who also recommend students for this class, and the receptionist. The family literacy teacher who most rarely gets to the office listed her supervisor first, then the AmeriCorps supervisor (she works closely with two AmeriCorps members.), then the reading specialist who does assessments for her, and of course, the receptionist. The second family literacy teacher listed only the education specialist (credited as a mentor) and the other family literacy instructor, mostly through phone contacts.

This was not a dramatic change from the initial interview, but all had some sense of closeness to GPLC support staff. All mentioned that they wouldn't hesitate now to pick up the phone and ask one of their teachers' group for help.

3. How often do you communicate with your supervisor? What are the usual occasions for communication? Who usually initiates contact?

Teacher 1 works in a downtown location four mornings a week and in our office four afternoons a week. She replied in this way, "As often as necessary, once a week maybe.

Occasions are what's going on in SPOC or the GED class, monthly reports. They are usually initiated by me but could be either, sometimes a third party is involved."

Teacher 2 works in a downtown location five days an week and very rarely comes to our office. She replied, " About twice a month by phone. Occasions are issues at work, contract obligations, interpreting our responsibility, sometimes for guidance (but rarely now that I've worked here longer), sometimes development opportunities. Initiation is 50-50."

Teacher 3, who works in a very remote location and is supported directly by only one or two AmeriCorps members, replied, ·At least three to five times a month, and more often if there is any sort of crisis. Occasions are approval on various projects, information on program, to see if everything is going as it should. Can be initiated by both. When you (the supervisor) get in touch with me first, it's usually information you need for proposals, immediate information."

Teacher 4 works in a remote location five days a week. He tutors a JTPA student twice a week in our main office in the late afternoon. Because a staff member from another agency does a parenting session for his students once a week on Thursday mornings, he is able to attend staff meetings at least once a month. He replied, "At least once at week. Occasions are pressing issues or budget issues or special events. They are usually initiated by me."

4. What do you see as the disadvantages of working in a "remote" location?

Teacher 1: "I sometimes feel detached from GPLC as a whole; our SPOC students don't see us as any different from the SPOC staff."

Teacher 2: "You're not with your colleagues. They are nice people so that is unfortunate. I'm mostly too busy to notice, but I miss feedback and having someone see if I'm doing a good job or a bad job. It's energizing to have visitors. I really enjoyed the day recently when you dropped in for a while."

Teacher 3: "I miss important information."

Teacher 4. ·" It's the sense of isolation, of feeling alone."

5. Are there any advantages?

Teacher 1: "You have the freedom to try different things without witnesses, without anyone knowing whether it fell flat or not."

Teacher 2: "Autonomy is not a bad thing, basically part of being a teacher. I don't want someone second guessing me."

Teacher 3: "Nobody is watching me every minute. I have a sense of freedom and being on my own responsibility. I can be an entrepreneur - but with back-up."

Teacher 4: "You're more autonomous, but that's a double-edged sword also. I'm not sure if a move I make is proper. I can be unsure and that makes me uneasy."

6. What events or professional development activities have you attended so far this year (1999) that allow you to interact with other GPLC staff? (or with other literacy professionals?)

Teacher 1: "the math module, the PAACE conference . . . I was with both GPLC staff and others."

Teacher 2 : the math module, the teachers' focus group for the Indicators of Program Quality, the program improvement team. Only the program improvement team was all GPLC staff."

Teacher 3: "Nothing so far this year -- the advanced family literacy training last summer (1998) I'm going again this summer. This training lets me mingle with people from all over the U.S. It's very important to me. It makes me ready to start again. I think I went to one staff meeting."

Teacher 4: "Lockhaven POC (point of contact) training. I shared information with the data base manager about LITPRO. I learned about PLATO. I can pass that on. The math module . . the Family Literacy Day. . . I attend at least one staff meeting a month."

7. How many meetings with other GPLC teachers have you attended this year? Have these been a positive experience?

All of the teachers said that they had attended all four scheduled meetings. One of the family literacy teachers mentioned that she had met with the family literacy team from the other site (teacher 4 and his colleague from another agency) several times during the year.

Teacher 1: "The meeting got us communicating as teachers, first venting and then finding common ground. We were able to discuss issues we all have such as retention and finding new ways to do things. We shared ideas and materials, problems and solutions."

Teacher 2: "We confirmed with each other that our hearts are in the right places; we shared obstacles. . . I have it easier than the family literacy teachers because my class is mandated. We (SPOC teachers) have it easier because we have a stick -- but they have only carrots. We all believe that helping this population is a most important thing to do."

Teacher 3: "We got to talk about retention, recruitment, lesson plans -- especially writing and math -- everything from soup to nuts."

Teacher 4: "I got to know the other teachers, what they did. We compared notes and frustrations. For me they were like therapy sessions. It was good to get to know them."

8. Have you felt more or less connected with the organization as a whole this year than last?

Teacher 1: "A little bit more. I get what (the family literacy teachers) do. I know better who everybody is and what they do. "

Teacher 2: "Yes, because I've gone to more professional development activities. Even though I'm off-site, people make you feel like you're there every day. I'm more aware of the congeniality of the agency."

Teacher 3: "Less, actually. I was away from work from October through most of January because I had a baby, and even since I got back it's been hard to balance everything. The teachers' meeting helped me to feel more connected with teachers who are teaching low income families. I know I'm not alone. I know the agency is with me. I know that I can pick up the phone and holler when I need help."

Teacher 4: "Less because of the way things have gone. I wasn't happy with my classes, too few committed students. I feel less useful. I feel on the periphery, more isolated. I think it's the cumulativeness of two difficult years."

9. Will you continue the meetings next year?

All of the teachers indicated that they had decided to resume the meetings in August.

10. Comparing this year to last, do you feel more or less supported/isolated?

Teacher 1: "I feel less isolated, a combination of being here longer and meeting with teachers. There are some advantages in meeting alone with teachers. All have about the same issues, dealing with case manger type persons (whether SPOC or welfare), retention, and recruitment. Getting a different viewpoint form someone who knows exactly where we're coming from as opposed to an administrator. The meetings were more of a problem solving group."

Teacher 2: "Less isolated. I've been here longer, and I know more people. In the teachers' meetings, we could complain about money, time, the problems in the work . . . but they weren't ever just gripe sessions."

Teacher 3: "Less isolated, but I never really felt isolated. I always had AmeriCorps members. The staff was really helpful and supportive after the baby, letting me do things flexibly. This year everything's not getting done the way I like it. I just have to take my time and slow down . . . and it will all come out. I think that whoever is working outside the office needs to come together and talk with each other in monthly meetings and on the phone. The help is even more psychological than practical."

Teacher 4: "More isolated. I've had two difficult years in a row. I feel I could contribute so much more."

The project was mostly successful: All four of the teachers valued the teachers meetings enough to continue them for the next fiscal year. All of the teachers valued having an understanding audience for brainstorming and general commiseration. All, except the new mother, found time for additional professional development activities which allowed for interaction with GPLC professionals and staff from other literacy providers. (She will go to an advanced training in her field this summer.) Having a closer relationship with each other did help three of the teachers feel less isolated . . . but the circumstances of the fourth's teaching situation -- and his own individual response to it -- were more significantly isolating for him than the benefits derived from the meetings. The meetings provided a platform for discussion of the difficulties at his site and with his students, but there didn't appear any outcomes from these sessions that were weighty enough to have an impact on his circumstances or his morale. He was morose for most of the year -- even though he attended at least one staff meeting a month and a fairly wide range of professional development and informational activities.

All of the teachers indicated fairly regular interaction with their supervisor. "Are you satisfied with the quantity and quality of supervision which you are given?" didn't seem a fair question coming from the supervisor. I compromised by asking more matter of fact questions. All of the teachers indicated that they communicated with their supervisor several times a month. All saw advantages in the autonomy that comes with "isolation' but one missed the fresh influences that come from visits, and the one who was least satisfied with his work felt the autonomy was a little dangerous because he couldn't be sure "if a move I make is proper."

VI. REFLECTION

The least appealing finding is always the ambiguous "yes and no" one. Yes, the teachers' meetings do increase the opportunities for collegial interaction, and the teachers do like that. Do they feel less isolated and more integrated into the agency as a result of the meetings? They feel less isolated, but not necessarily more connected to the agency. That seems to depend more on individual temperament and circumstance. The teacher who attends staff meetings regularly is the one who feels most isolated and marginalized. He also comes to the main office often to pick up mail or to meet with a one-to-one student. (This is in addition to his family literacy class.) The teacher coping with picking up the reins after a maternity leave (and the continuing challenge of managing the needs of a small baby and a demanding class) feels that she has more support than ever, but still feels less connected with the agency than before --even though more connected with her peers. The two who do feel more connected this year attribute this both to the range of professional development activities that they have attended and to the teachers meetings. This was part of the intent of the project, to try to engage the teachers with colleagues way from their work sites.

The number of other staff that the teachers communicate with continues to be fairly low, but is better than before. Through work-related and professional development activities, most now have a nodding acquaintance with most of the main office staff and a few coordinators. Three work closely with at least two other staff members (plus the receptionist, of course). One even refers to the education specialist as his mentor. The SPOC teacher stills sees routinely only the teacher who works with her part time and the members of the program improvement team. However, she has become very aware of the quality and "congeniality" of her colleagues.

The plan to have teachers attend staff meetings on a rotating basis did not work out this year. This needs to be revisited, and perhaps a firm policy put in place that teaching staff attend a certain number of staff meetings a year. (Administratively, this will be a problem.) Intuitively, I still believe that staff meetings are the best way to get a sense of who's who and what is going on. Although all the teachers read the minutes and get information, they miss the opportunity for discussion -- and the influence on policy that discussion affords.

One unintended result of this project was our first written overview of all of our special projects and affiliations. As were discussing the teachers' need for information about GPLC, other staff indicated that we are involved in so many things that even "old" main office staff couldn't keep up with all of the acronyms and special projects. We then produced an eight page booklet which detailed each of our involvements and projects and the staff contact person who knew most about it. This has proven really useful for all staff -- but especially for newer staff members.

It doesn't seem to me that more interaction with the supervisor is an important issue -- all seem to interact with the supervisor often. However, talking about issues is not the same as an on-site visit with students and teachers and supervisor interacting together. Very few of these occurred in 1998-99 (no more than one or two per site).

Perhaps regular visits from a range of staff might result in a greater sense of inclusion. There could be almost as many pretexts for such visits as there are staff positions (The Student Support Specialist could do orientations and invite students into the Fellowship Group; Reading Specialists could do in-service workshops for teachers and students; the AmeriCorps Coordinator could talk about service opportunities.) I guess ultimately the teachers' meetings combined with opportunities to meet with other staff through professional development activities still seem to be the best way of connecting our staff so that we all have a sense that in whatever location or setting we are one agency with one common mission of service to students and leadership in literacy. Next year, I will have all staff who work out of the main office attend at least two staff meetings. At one of these, they will be asked to do a brief presentation to introduce their sites and activities. The area coordinators do this now, and it seems to work in keeping everyone in touch will our far-flung one-to-one program.

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Making a Choice Between The TABE and The CASAS

Action Researcher's Name:

Elaine Nagel

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV's Adult Education Program used action research to make a decision between the Life Skill CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) and the TABE 7/8 (Test of Adult Basic Education) for their primary standardized assessment instrument. As part of a continuous improvement effort, the intent was to select the assessment instrument which offered the highest level of satisfaction as rated by students, teachers, administration and the Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education. MIU IV's Adult Education Program is primarily intermediate level ABE, upper level ABE and GED preparation. The assessment instrument has been the TABE for the last seven years. Two pilot sites used the TABE for four months, then switched to the CASAS for all pre and post testing for six months.

The TABE was the assessment instrument of choice based on predictability to the GED test, usefulness in planning individual instruction, ease of scoring and communicating results to students. The CASAS took significantly less time to administer and produced slightly less student test anxiety. There was no measurable impact on student retention with one assessment over the other. Feedback from students, staff and program administrator favored the TABE. MIU IV will continue to use the TABE 7/8 for standardized assessment.

II. PROBLEM

With local program self-assessment under the EQUAL project, the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV's program improvement team scrutinized many current procedures and explored other current best practice options. The CASAS had been deemed an "up and coming" adult assessment by many practitioners in the field and seemed to warrant further review. The purpose of this action research effort was to determine which was better suited, the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) or the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) for standardized assessment in MIU IV's Adult Education Program.

MIU IV provides Adult Basic Education for intermediate and upper level students, as well as GED preparation classes. Lower level ABE (0-3 G. Eq.) are referred to other programs in the area, usually a local literacy council. The TABE has been the MIU IV's assessment instrument for seven years. It is standardized and norm-referenced. It measures academic skills in reading, mathematics, language and spelling. Two formats are available; the Complete Battery TABE, which takes approximately 3 V2 hours to complete and a shorter, but less diagnostic, Survey TABE. Both formats have advancing difficulty levels and pre and post test forms. Scores are available as scaled scores, stanine, percentile rank and grade level equivalents.

The CASAS is standardized and criterion referenced. It is organized around over 300 functional context competencies in areas of basic communication, consumer economics, community resources, health, employment, government and law, computation, learning to learn and independent living skills. Results are reported as scaled scores. The assessment allows for advancing difficulty levels and has pre and post test forms. It offers a CASAS Curriculum Materials Guide for instructional use in accessing current trade workbooks and materials around the student's identified need. As part of a continuous improvement effort, MIU IV was seeking the standardized assessment instrument that offered the highest satisfaction level as rated by the users. The users included the students, the instructors, the program administrator and the Department of Education's Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education. The program had concerns with satisfaction around issues such as student placement, instructional diagnosis, individual instructional planning, student test anxiety, student retention and monitoring progress.

III. PLANNING

The plan was to use the TABE for establishing the baseline data for comparing and contrasting with the CASAS. Two open-entry sties were to use the TABE for all pre and post testing with students from September through December. Starting in January and ending in June, the two pilot sites were to use the CASAS for all pre and post testing.

Feedback was to be collected from four different stakeholder groups namely, the students, the instructional staff, the program administrator and the Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education at the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The feedback and results were to be compared and contrasted using the following criteria:

- usefulness in planning individual instruction
- impact on student test anxiety
- impact on student retention
- communicating results to students

- length of time to administer
- ease of scoring
- acceptability of use for required PDE information
- predictability to the GED test

CASAS testing materials were to be purchased, approvals obtained, CASAS training scheduled, and the pilot sites inserviced. The plan was to determine if the CASAS or the TABE was better suited for use in the MIU IV Adult Education Program.

IV. ACTION

The MIU IV program administrator participated in a one day CASAS training. Materials were purchased, teachers and counselors inserviced and two pilot sites selected. Four teachers and two counselors worked with the TABE for the first four months of the program year, then switched and used the CASAS for the last six months. Both pilot sites were open-entry, open-exit with experienced teachers and counselors. 28 CASAS assessments were given during this time. The two assessment instruments were then compared and evaluated in terms of the planned criteria from the perspective of the four primary stakeholders.

V. RESULTS

Preferences of all four stakeholders were taken into consideration. The students admitted slightly more test anxiety with the TABE but also more satisfaction. The TABE appeared to be in line with their test expectations and for measuring the specific skills required for a GED diploma. Several students expected grade equivalents or percentile ranks as required for job training programs. There seemed to be an established paradigm that the TABE was a "real test" and provided helpful information on what was needed before stepping up to the GED test.

The teaching staff all expressed prior interest and support for 1) criteria referenced assessment with emphasis on the level of mastery rather than the relationship with a norming group, 2) the CASAS claim of reduced test anxiety and better student retention, and 3) accurate but shorter testing times. However, after using the CASAS for six months, all six staff involved preferred to test their students with the TABE. They found the diagnostic and prescriptive information from the TABE profile more helpful for interpreting and planning meaningful and specific skill instruction with students. They were as frustrated as their students with the seemingly poor predictability of the CASAS to the GED test. They suggested that the CASAS may be a very beneficial assessment for lower level ABE participants which make up less than 5% of current enrollments.

Staff found the CASAS Instructional Material Guide, which provided teaching resources from trade workbooks to be professionally questionable in a few areas. They preferred to self-design instruction and self-select materials on an individual student need basis. They also found maintaining an adequate supply of the numerous instructional materials very cumbersome with their sites limited space and shelving.

The program administrator found the CASAS technical assistance cumbersome to access. While the technical assistance staff were congenial and enthusiastic in support of the CASAS, it was difficult to call in CASAS scores for a GED predictability on an individual student by student basis as they suggested. A conversion scale was not available. The program administrator preferred the TABE as the better assessment for aligning and measuring progress with the programs taught curriculum.

The Bureau of Adult Basic Education and Literacy Education has listed both the TABE and the CASAS as acceptable standardized testing instruments for their progress measuring and federal reporting requirements.

In summary, the feedback from all four stakeholder groups strongly supported keeping the TABE as the MIU IV assessment instrument. However, there was agreement on CASAS strength in the areas of shorter testing time requirement, slightly less student test anxiety, and favorable support for use with lower level ABE participants.

RESULTS SUMMARY

Criteria	TABE	CASAS	Assessment Preferred
Usefulness in planning individual instruction	Significantly more comprehensive and aligned with program curriculum and the actual GED test	Aligned with life skills competencies but not with objectives voiced by participants or with program curriculum. Instructional guide is cumbersome and somewhat unclear.	TABE
Impact on student test anxiety	Slightly more anxiety producing	Slightly less anxiety producing	CASAS
Impact on student retention	No differences	No differences	Neutral
Communicating results to students	Aligned with specific objectives as voiced by students. Good diagnostic profile for presenting to student.	Not aligned to GED skills that most students are seeking	TABE
Length of time to administer	Lengthy 3+ hours	Very acceptable length	CASAS
Ease of scoring	Familiar and easy to score once trained	Pretest answer sheet was difficult to score, too many answer booklets	TABE
Acceptability to PDE/ABLE	Acceptable	Acceptable	Neutral
Predictability to the GED test	Solid, useful predictability	Low predictability that is difficult to obtain	TABE

VI. REFLECTION

Participation in action research to determine which standardized assessment to use made several observations noteworthy. First, an assessment needs to align with the curriculum and the instruction. Clearly, the TABE does that for MIU IV better than the CASAS. Second, change happens slowly. If MIU IV decides to transition into a life skill type curriculum as our student population becomes more difficult to serve and requires lower level ABE instruction, then a considerable amount of staff inservice and pre-change activity would be needed. We are very comfortable with the familiar and time must be scheduled to shift paradigms and build a comfort level with a new framework. Third, some students perceived a CASAS assessment as a "lowering of the bar" when compared to the TABE. They obviously need communication and instruction to help bridge and see as valuable their life experiences and skills. Fourth, while "best practices" discourage grade equivalent scores for adult education programs, we need to acknowledge that our students may need scores of this nature for employment attainment opportunities. Fifth and last, this was a very limited and subjective evaluation based on MIU IV teacher, counselor, student and administrator feedback. This action research is program specific and should not be generalized.

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Increasing Positive Outcomes in GED Classes Through Family Literacy Programs

Action Researcher's Name:

Stuart Roe

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

Traditional GED classes offered by the Lycoming County Literacy Project may not meet the needs of the entire family. Traditional programs do not always make considerations for items such as childcare, parenting issues, transportation needs, heath care needs, and the financial responsibilities of the family. Many of these factors are given as reasons why students stop attending GED classrooms.

This project examined both traditional and family literacy GED program participants to determine which programs produce the best results. G.E.D. test scores were collected form instructors instructing both traditional and family literacy GED participants. Test score data was not comparable due to the length of the study and participant point of entry. Research shows adults participating in family literacy programs have a higher attendance rate than traditional GED classes. Data collected from our families showed while participants in family literacy programs had higher attendance rates overall there was only a 4% increase in attendance rate between traditional and family literacy GED programs.

II. PROBLEM

Lycoming County Literacy Project in based in Williamsport and serves the largest county geographically in the state of Pennsylvania. In Lycoming County 8.5% of adults have less than an eighth grade education, 25.5% of adults do not have a high school diploma. The need in Lycoming County has obviously been established. Services to serve these needs have been established however, the population which needs these services most often has other barriers to attending. In particular, single parent families in need of literacy services such as attainment of their GED have multiple barriers preventing them to take advantage of our services. In the fall of 1998 our program began a family literacy program. Before the fall of 1998 GED classes have been available to our students only in traditional classroom form. The family literacy program has allowed us to work more intensively with parents to "remove" some of their barriers including child care, transportation, case management, and more flexible scheduling. By examining GED participant success and attendance records our program could begin to see if putting intensive case management, flexible scheduling, etc. in place would indeed increase participant success rate. If greater success rates could be proven through family literacy services our program would benefit by showing our community collaborators and service providers the benefits of working with families as a unit instead of individuals. This knowledge would also be used as a tool to encourage collaborations between community agencies and our program. This knowledge would allow community service providers to see the relevance of support services and to encourage service providers to provide a more holistic approach to social service, in particular literacy issues. Knowledge gained as to GED classroom best practices could also be used as a tool to examine our program for areas which families and service providers might see as weaknesses.

III. PLANNING

The method for completing this project was data collection and analysis. I studied both traditional and family literacy GED classroom records to determine if one class scored higher on test scores and/or had higher attendance rates. I began by examining attendance records and test score records for participants who joined either the traditional GED or family literacy GED classes. Test scores were collected on participants who entered either program between 12/1/1998 and 4/19/99. In addition to classroom attendance and test scores an informal questioning process was also completed to determine reasons why participants preferred or thought they were more successful in one program as compared to another.

To collect data 20 GED student records from 7/1 through 11/30, 1998 were randomly selected to use as a baseline point of comparison. The percentage of classes attended was calculated by dividing the number of class hours available by the number of class hours scheduled for a particular participant. For example, if a participant attended 8 out of 10 scheduled class hours their percentage of attendance would be 8/10 or 80%. This was calculated for 20 randomly selected GED students from the baseline group and averaged. The average attendance percentage for the baseline group was a 49% attendance rate over a five month period. Data was also collected form current family literacy participants enrolled during the projects timeframe.
After collecting the aforementioned date I asked the question, Will enrolling GED participants who qualify for family literacy programs increase their attendance and success rates significantly, 20% or more.

Research indicates many benefits from family literacy programs.

Short-term benefits: Current research from the National Center for Family Literacy shows that family literacy programming is more effective than traditional approaches to adult education for the most vulnerable adults and children. NCFL has used standardized assessments, case studies, anecdotal records, parent surveys and interviews, and staff observations to evaluate all aspects of the program. Early finding indicate that both parents and children made important gains as a result of attending family literacy programs.

NCFL studies on families with reading and math scores who averaged were between 6th and 7th grade reading levels showed 30% of adult students either received GED certification during the program year, passes parts of the exam, or had scheduled the exam at the end of the program year. *Breaking the Cycle of Illiteracy: The Kenan Family Literacy Model Program (NCFL, 1989).*

Adults participating in family literacy programs showed greater gains in literacy than adults in adult-focused programs. Participants in family literacy programs were less likely to drop out of the program than were participants in adult focused programs. *The Power of Family Literacy (NCFL, 1996).*

Long-term benefits: It was found that one year after leaving family literacy programs 66% of adults were either enrolled or had definite plans for re-enrolling in some form of higher or continuing education program or were employed. One year after the program 35% of participants were employed, while fewer than 10% were employed at the time they enrolled in the program. *Study of the Impact of the Kenan Trust Model for Family Literacy (NCFL, 1991).*

NCFL documented results of data collected from 30 sites across the country in 1997 showing that adults made significant changes in their lives. 54% of adults seeking educational credentials received the GED or its equivalent. 40% were enrolled in some higher education or training program. 50% of those not currently enrolled in an education or training program are employed. Although I have not chosen to focus on the progress of children and or parents and children together, results for these areas are also similar.

IV. ACTION

Before data collection began several factors were considered to ensure each group received the same instruction. This was achieved by making sure all students had the same GED instructor and used the same text. The only differences between traditional GED classroom participants and family literacy participants were outside factors such as childcare, intensive case management, and having children between the ages of birth and not completed third grade (family literacy eligibility criteria).

As data collection began it quickly became relevant that our traditional GED students would far out number family literacy GED students. This posed problems in comparing data. To compensate for student differences the same number, although a smaller participant pool, of family literacy participants and traditional GED participants were used to do comparisons.
Problems also arose with selecting students randomly. By selecting students randomly the possibility of contacting that particular student to ascertain why they left the program or had attendance problems was diminished substantially. There are several possibilities for students who could not be contacted, moved within the city, moved anywhere outside the city, chose not to respond, etc. The only category for these former GED students all fit into was "unable to contact". GED test scores also proved not to be valid measures of success during the project time period. Many students did not test during this time period or only tested in certain subject areas which could not be compared from student to student. Because of the small numbers of participant comparing groups average test scores did not work either as one particular low test score could dramatically alter the group average.

Attendance proved to be the most easily quantifiable measure of "success" Attendance records were kept and percent of classes attended were calculated based on number of class hours available and actual attendance.

V. RESULTS

After comparing and gathering data on GED test scores of both traditional and family literacy GED participants it became clear that comparisons could not be made because of the time frame and different points of entry from particular participants. Many students came to the literacy project because school district programs had large class sizes and little one on one help was available. For this reason many students who could be described as lower level decided to attend literacy program GED classes. On the contrary family literacy GED program participants came to the program for reasons such as added benefits for their children, more flexible scheduling, or they were mandated by assistance office case workers. For these reasons as well as limited test scores available during the projects time frame test score comparison could not be made. Attendance records were however compared between the two groups. Attendance percentages for participants mandated to attend were not used as this skews the percentages in favor of family literacy. It was discovered by examining 12 randomly selected traditional GED participants that their percentage of attendance was 41% meaning students showed up for 41% of their scheduled hours. Family literacy participants had a slightly higher percentage of attendance at 45%.

VI. REFLECTION

Research indicated that family literacy programs are indeed more successful at retaining participants. This project did indeed support research findings, however, 4% is not a large percentage difference particularly in a study this size (24 participants). With a pool of participants this size one extremely low attendance percentage can drastically alter program results. Perhaps the most important aspect in terms of relevance for our program is looking at the reasons participants gave for not attending programs as often as they would like. Our program can now look at the reasons given and decide what we as a program can to alleviate some of these barriers. Reasons given for poor attendance and or dropping out of traditional GED programs were as follows:

- Interference with job
- No time
- Got GED
- Making no accomplishments
- Humiliating

I believe the results were as expected, family literacy programs have higher attendance rate, however I believe the minimal difference can be accounted for by a combination of different factors: 1) the length of the study and 2) the number of participants 3) different points of entry for participants 4) the timing of the study (holiday/flu season) and 5) the differences between family literacy participants and traditional GED participants, those being children, age, availability of day care and transportation. Family literacy participants are much more likely due to the nature of the program to have children enrolled in preschool, have access to transportation services, and the benefits of a case manager to trouble shoot potential barriers and offer encouragement. Another possibility for results not as impressive as national research suggests is the age of our family literacy program. The Lycoming County Literacy Project began our family literacy program in the fall of 1998. When this study began our program was only beginning and has been through several revisions since it's inception and I would expect changes to continue on a smaller scale for the 1999-2000 grant year.

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

The Benefits of a Tutor Training Manual

Action Researcher's Name:

Stacey Roles

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

The Lycoming County Literacy Project hosts a tutor training workshop approximately four times per year in order to certify tutors to teach our learners. Previously, the information provided for the tutors at this workshop consisted of nearly 100 handouts distributed at random. Based on comments, observations, and my own frustrations, I determined that having such a large amount of information distributed in a disorderly fashion created a problem for both the instructors and the learners of the training workshops. As a result, I revised the handouts and compiled them with some other useful information into a tutor training manual. Based on the results of a survey given to both the instructors and learners, the development and implementation of the tutor training manual provided more useful, usable, comprehensive training for everyone, as compared to just simply dispersing handouts.

II. PROBLEM

Approximately four times per year, the literacy project hosts a tutor training session in order to recruit new tutors to teach our students to read. The training consists of several informal lectures and activities designed to enable the tutors to teach a person how to read. The problem facing the Lycoming County Literacy Project is that the training material that is dispersed at the tutor training sessions is not organized, compiled, or distributed in an orderly fashion. Unfortunately, a large amount of important information is handed out to the new tutors in a short period of time. This only adds to the frustration of absorbing all the information given.

One of the reasons the training material has not been better organized is because of a lack of time. The staff at the literacy project is very busy. As is in most offices, we all have very limited time to work on projects that do not require immediate attention. As a result, there has not been enough time to organize tutor training material into a more easily understood manual.

Having completed the tutor training session, as well as working in the literacy office, I can see first hand the need for a tutor training manual. When I was certified as a tutor, it was extremely difficult for me to sort through all the training material (nearly 100 pages). It was nearly impossible to find a specific piece of the information that was given without becoming frustrated while sorting through the entire stack of papers. I also read through several evaluations from past tutor training's and nearly 30 percent of the population surveyed commented on the lack of organization of the material.

I discovered that it is equally difficult for my supervisors to keep track of 100 handouts let alone distribute them in an orderly fashion. I surveyed my supervisors, who also instruct the tutor training's, and they agreed that there was a need for a training manual.

III. PLANNING

I planned to eliminate this problem by organizing a tutor training manual that would be well organized as well as user friendly. The training manual I developed has a table of contents with corresponding chapters and page numbers. The only materials I needed to complete the project were paper, a computer, and a binding machine. In order to create the manual I needed to first put the information in logical order. I also needed to retype several pages to make the manual consistent. With the approval of my supervisor, I made chapter pages and a table of contents. Finally, I created a completed version of the training manual.

To create a baseline, I gave a copy of the manual as well as a survey about the manual, to tutors who were given the large amount of loose handouts at the tutor training sessions. The focus group was chosen from tutors who have been active based on attendance to meetings and tutor hours submitted. I also reviewed the evaluations made by tutors who completed the most recent tutor training sessions (before the manual was implemented).

I interviewed my supervisors as another means of collecting data. I asked them if the manual made it easier for them to teach the tutors. I found that a manual served as a better guideline for training. This allowed me to keep this project up to date with my supervisors as well. I submitted my work to them periodically for suggestions, corrections, and improvements.
I thought I would be constrained by not getting the responses to the evaluations that I was looking for. I also wondered if it would be difficult to keep the focus of this problem narrow. However, after talking to people about the manual the response was exactly what I was looking for. In fact, a copy of the manual was shown at one of our board meetings. As a result, I received a thank-you card from the founder of the Lycoming County Literacy Project.

The question my project posed was "Will the development and implementation of a tutor training manual provide more useful, usable, comprehensive training for both tutors and students and in the long run aid the recruitment process?" My results proved that the answer was yes.

IV. ACTION

In order to plan for this project, I had to first make a manual. This part of the project took much longer than I had anticipated. The first step to creating a manual was to organize all the material we received into logical order. Based on the information given, I divided the information into five sections which later became chapters. After organizing the material into sections, I then had to organize the sections into pages. In the mean time I had my supervisors review each step of the process. Unfortunately, I revised the manual several times before it was complete. I retyped numerous pages to make the manual consistent and added page numbers for easier usage. Finally, I added a content page and introductory chapter describing the literacy project and the manual was complete. This part of the project took approximately four months.

After the manual was complete, I made 20 copies for one of my supervisors to take to a prison training. Before the training manual was implemented nearly 30 percent of the attendants of our tutor training's commented on the lack of organization of written materials. In the first training after the manual was implemented there were no negative comments made about the materials used. In fact there were two comments made about the manual being the most helpful information received.

As another means of collecting data. I mailed a copy of the manual to over 20 of our most active tutors based on attendance to literacy activities and submission of tutor/student hours. I tried to include a variety of tutors including young and old, male and female, and also some who are on the Board of Directors. Attached to the manual was a letter explaining the nature of this PA-ARN project, as well as a survey asking questions about the manual. I asked them if they had any difficulties sorting through the material that was distributed at the training session they attended. I also asked them if they preferred the manual or the handouts. There were also six other pertinent questions. The only problem I had with this collecting this data was not getting all the responses from everyone I mailed a survey to. However, I received enough to accurately determine if the project was a success.

The last bit of data I collected involved interviewing the tutor training instructors who are also the supervisors of the office I work in. I asked them many questions about how the manual made it easier for them to conduct the trainings. They were all for the manual and gave me several suggestions to improve it along the way.

V. RESULTS

I received excellent results from the survey. Fifty percent of the sample group said that they had difficulties sorting through the material that was given at the tutor training session that they attended. The entire sample preferred the manual over the handouts. When asked to rate the handbook on a scale on one to ten, the average rating the group gave was an 8.5. Several participants also gave encouraging comments about how helpful the manual was. The main comment was that it was easier to go back and find a specific bit of information without having any difficulties.

My supervisors were also impressed with the manual. They said that it made it much easier for them to refer to page numbers during training to avoid confusion. It also made it easier for them to efficiently distribute the material without having to pass out 100 sheets of paper to each participant. Overall, it was much less time consuming for obvious reasons. The manual is easier to assemble and prepare as well as hand out.

Fortunately, as people found out about the manual by word of mouth, they were very encouraging. One of my co-workers used the manual at a tutor training support group that she was establishing. I also received praise from some of the literacy board members. In fact, the founder of the Lycoming County Literacy Project mailed me a letter to personally thank me herself.

VI. REFLECTION

I feel that overall the project went very well. Although it was very frustrating and time consuming revising the manual over and over, it was well worth it to see the finished product. I feel that it will help the literacy project significantly because the manual can be given to anyone who wants to know more about teaching someone to read. The manual can also be given to anyone who wants to know more about our organization.

It was nice to see that this project affected and will continue to affect numerous other people besides myself. That made the difference. Now that the project has been finished for a short time, its nice to see the completed work in hind sight. I have continued to get positive feedback since I distributed the manuals to the focus group. Evidently, some of them must be showing the manual to others. I am sure as time goes on, I will see further results. My supervisors have not yet gotten the chance to get used to using the manual. I am sure I will probably also need to make more corrections as more people review it. However, despite all the work involved, if I did the project again, I don't think I would really change much. I am happy with the results.

Lycoming County
LITERACY
PROJECT
INC

March 26, 1999

Dear Tutors,

Currently, I am in the process of planning a PA-ARN (Pennsylvania Action Research Network) project. For my project I have chosen to make a tutor training handbood in place of the handouts that all or most of you received when you were first trained as a tutor. Hopefully, the development and implementation of a tutor training manual will provide more useful, usable, comprehensive training for tutors, as compared to just simply distributing handouts.

I chose to send a copy of the handbook to the most active tutors, based on attendance to literacy activities and submission of tutor/student hours. I feel that your opinion is especially valuable to this project. It would help me tremendously if you could look at the handbook and respond by mailing back the enclosed survey.

Thank you so much for your time and attention. I hope that the tutor training manual is very beneficial. All the information found in the handbook is comprised of previous handouts given at tutor trainings as well as some new information that should also make tutoring successful. Call the office at 321-0200 if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Stacey Roles ☺

Stacey Roles

c/o James V. Brown Library
19 East 4th Street
Williamsport, Pennsylvania 17701

Handbook Questionnaire

1. After reviewing the handbook, do you feel that it would be better or worse to implement it in place of the handouts previously distributed at tutor training workshops?
Circle: **Better** or **Worse**

2. On a scale of one(bad) to ten(good), how would you rate the handbook?
Circle: **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

3. Hypothetically speaking, if you were to attend another tutor training workshop, would you prefer to use the manual or handouts?
Circle: **Manual** or **Handouts**

4. Did you have any difficulties sorting through the material that was given at the tutor training workshop that you attended?
Circle: **Yes** or **No**

5. Is the handbook more helpful to you than the handouts?
Circle: **Yes** or **No**

6. Please explain why you would favor either the tutor training manual or the handout that were given when you attended the training workshop.
____
____
____

7. In contrast, explain why you oppose either the training manual or the handouts. ____
____
____

8. List any suggestions you have that could help improve the tutor training manual. ____
____
____

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION
able
PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
Special Project
A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Teaching Grammar in an ESL Classroom

Action Researcher's Name:

Timothy Shenk

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Pennsylvania Action Research Monograph

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940”s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

This paper examines the teaching of grammar in an English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. The idea for this research project stemmed from my observation that many times ESL students don't seem to adequately learn the grammar taught in class. Some theorists believe that overt grammar teaching should not be implemented in an ESL classroom; instead, teachers should focus on communicative activities. Both my personal observations and the information I had read concerning overt grammar teaching made me curious about how much grammar my ESL students were retaining after a period of instruction.

For a week, I instructed my students on the topic of comparatives, superlatives, and equatives. I gave a pre-test, post-test, and a delayed post-test in written form to my whole class and in oral form to five students. My expectation was that the five students would use the form correctly in both the written and oral pre-test 20 percent of the time. Along with the testing, I asked the whole class to write a response to specific lessons, and I kept extensive notes of my own feelings about each day of the grammar instruction. I also maintained detailed lesson plans. Overall, the students seemed to feel that grammar instruction was important. The results of the testing showed minimal to moderate gains among most of the students, but there was evidence that the students were experimenting with some of the new structures they had learned.

II. PROBLEM

I teach advanced ESL to a class of 15 to 25 immigrants and refugees aged 17 to 70 at the Adult Enrichment Center in Lancaster city, Pennsylvania. This is my third year of teaching the advanced level class. Through my teaching experiences, I have noticed that many students don't seem to retain or correctly utilize the grammatical structures I teach in class. As a result of this observation, I decided to participate in this Pennsylvania Action Research Network (PA-ARN) project which would give me data about the effectiveness of grammar teaching among my students.

The issue of whether grammar should be taught in the classroom has been a controversial debate among linguists, particularly over the last few decades. Krashen and Terrell (1983) actually argue that concentrating on accurate grammar and pronunciation impedes students progress in the target language because it takes their focus away from developing comprehension skills (pp. 77-8). They continue by saying that since adults have many similarities with children in the language acquisition process, they cannot be forced to learn a grammatical structure before they are internally ready for it. (p. 1).

If the theories of Krashen and Terrell and other linguists who have down played the effectiveness of grammar instruction are correct, then language teaching both in domestic and international settings would change dramatically. I wanted to know on a personal level if I could see improvements in grammar usage among my students so that I could make a more informed decision about how I would teach my class. During the initial phases of this PA-ARN project, I wrote, "If this study shows that overt grammar teaching does not in any way improve the ability of my students to communicate effectively, then I will either eliminate grammar teaching altogether or take a hard look at the way I teach grammar." Evidently, I thought the only way to measure the value of grammar instruction was through obtaining measurable results from the students.

III. PLANNING

I decided to teach comparatives (taller than), superlatives (the tallest) and equatives (as tall as) in early March. My plan was to give the whole class a written pre-test, post-test, and a second posttest at least a month after the first test. On top of this, I also thought I should study a smaller group of about five students to whom I would administer an oral pre-test, post-test and a second post-test with written consent from the students (appendix). For these five students, I estimated that their written and oral pre-test scores would average 20 percent, but that their second post-test scores would average 80 percent.

In order to prepare for the written testing, I created three tests (pre-test in appendix) which were similar in their structure and in the number of questions, but had differing questions and data. I also made three large collages depicting people, buildings, animals, and other items which could be compared. I decided that I would tape record the oral testing and then write out transcripts of what each student said in order to analyze their grammar usage. To prepare for the recording sessions, I connected a microphone to a tape recorder in order to get the best quality recording possible. Other plans I had for data collection included students' reflections for various lessons, my own analysis of each instructional day, and the use of my lesson plans.

It was evident before I began the testing process that there would be some constraints to receiving accurate data. First of all, I was aware that the five class representatives would know what grammar point I was testing them on and that the type of oral test I was administering did not include free conversations. Therefore, I would not be testing them on their ability to use the grammar in everyday usage, but rather in controlled settings. Secondly, I knew that the results from the five class representatives were not necessarily indicative of the scores from the entire class. In fact, since these five students knew they were being closely analyzed, I realized they would likely study the grammar extra diligently, thereby making the results inconclusive. During the "reflection" stage of this paper, I will comment on how I could have restructured this project to ensure more accurate results.

After deciding that I would teach comparatives, superlatives and equatives for a week to my advanced level ESL class, and after acknowledging the difficulties and data collection problems I might encounter, I developed a goal in the form of a question: Will one week of teaching a specific grammatical point to five adult ESL class representatives in Lancaster city help them to improve their proficiency level to 80 percent of accuracy a month after the intervention? Before I answer this question, I would like to describe the details of the research project.

IV. ACTION

I taught the students how to use adjectives as comparatives, superlatives and equatives on March 2,3,4 and 8. Due to the nature of the program, only four students out of 25 to 30 students attended all of these classes. Each class period was three hours long, but I rarely taught grammar during the full class period, and some students could not stay for the entire class. I gave the whole class a written pre-test on March 2, a written post-test on March 8, and a second written post-test on April 14. Unfortunately, many of the students were not present for all three days of testing. In order to obtain data about the oral competency of the class, I chose six students from a variety of levels and countries to represent the class. These six students signed a consent form which freed me to use their testing results for this paper. Unfortunately, after the first post-test, one of the six class representatives terminated her participation in the project. I gave the remaining five participants an oral pre-test, an oral post-test and a second oral post-test around the same time that I administered the three written tests (see appendix for the oral testing grading sheet).

These five class representatives come from a variety of backgrounds and have different goals. Participant A is a 43 year old student who studied English in her home country of South

Korea for 10 years, and in the U.S. for 1 1/2 years. "A" wants to learn as much English as possible before returning to South Korea in the indefinite future. Participant B is a 31 year old Vietnamese student who studied English in her country for six years before continuing her English studies in the U.S. 1 1/2 years ago. "B's" goal is to get her GED, go to a vocational school or college, and find a job in an office. Participant C, from the Ukraine, is a 41 year old student who arrived in the U.S. three years ago. "C" studied English for five years in his home country and for 1 1/2 years in the U.S. The places "C" uses his English are in the store, at work, and at a friend's house.

Participant D terminated her involvement in the project. Participant E, from Puerto Rico, is a 19 year old student who studied English for 12 years in his home country. "E" has only lived in the U.S. for the past four months. Although "E's" goal is to speak without problems, he does not feel pressured to learn the language quickly. Participant F, 47, studied English in her home country of Colombia for a year before moving to the U.S. 24 years ago. "F" has studied English in the U.S. for five years. To become a secretary or a nurse's aide is the goal of "F."

There were a number of constraints to giving the oral test to these five individuals. First of all, it was difficult to find a space available to administer the oral test. Frequently, all of the rooms were utilized during class time, and after class many of these participants had to leave. I had to find ways to schedule students into slots when rooms were available. Secondly, it was difficult to teach class while at the same time making sure the participants were successfully completing the oral testing. Thirdly, the microphone I was using for oral testing mysteriously disappeared making the recordings difficult to hear, especially when a class was being taught in the same room as the testing. Fourthly, since I was sometimes helping a student with the oral testing while the rest of the class was working on the written exam, I couldn't always be with the class while they were testing. It appeared a few students shared answers, although I asked them not to, thereby skewing the results.

I asked the five participants to attend class as much as possible during the grammar teaching: Participants E and A are the only ones who missed a class. As with all my units on grammar, I taught the structures within the framework of a theme and a topic. The theme was "culture" and the topic was "The Amish."

The following is a brief synopsis and the response of students and/or myself to various lessons that I taught during this unit. On Tuesday, March 2, the main grammar activity revolved around writing. The students imagined they were going to host an Amish person at their house for supper, but they wanted to prepare him/her for all the differences between the host and guest community by writing a letter. Naturally, this activity utilized a lot of comparative and superlative adjectives. After class, I journaled about this lesson: "A lot of these activities would fall under the product or skill categories. We didn't do any process activities since level four didn't seem ready for process learning. (My level four class is joined by level five on Tuesdays and Thursdays). We studied the Amish all of last week, and therefore, this topic was very familiar to them. When teaching grammar, it is helpful not to introduce new vocabulary so that students can focus solely on the grammar."

On Wednesday, March 3, I took the students through three steps; grammar as product, skill and process. I went through the comparative and superlative steps again using Tuesday's list of adjectives from the writing activity. In my journal, I wrote, "This seemed to be immensely helpful for the students who hadn't grasped the concept before." With this grammar as product activity completed, we continued with a grammar as skill activity. The students wrote sentences comparing specific topics which I chose within the framework of the Amish community and the students' community. After class, I journaled, "It turned into a game since students only got a point if no one else in the class chose the same sentence." Next, we moved into process learning. Without preparation, students had to compare U.S. culture with their own culture. In relation to Tuesday and Wednesday's classes, one student wrote, "I'm feeling very good about the different activities in the class, because is important to talk and practice the new words."

After class on Thursday, March 4, I journaled, "I think I screwed up." This particular Thursday was a snowy day, and only half the class came, but I continued with the lesson since I needed the expertise of the level five students to help the level four students complete the task. Using about 20 pictures about the Amish community, I had written equative sentences, half of which were grammatically incorrect. I asked the students to work in groups to decide which sentences were correct, restructure the incorrect sentences, and make a list of guidelines for how to use equatives correctly. The level five students seemed to benefit from the challenge of the activity, but I felt bad for the level four students. I journaled, "For level four, it was either a negative and confusing and time consuming task, or else it did benefit them somewhat in the sense that it gave them some foundational rules." One of the level four students wrote, "I'd like admit, basically worked students level five. What about me?" Since I wanted the level five students to take the post-test, I gave the test to the whole class, but then surprised the level four students with a re-test on Monday.

Monday's class went much better than Thursday's class. The students started with a worksheet in which they practiced comparatives and equatives. I then gave them a word scramble sheet using equatives which related to pictures of the Amish. I later journaled, "Both of these activities went very well and I couldn't have been happier with the results. Unfortunately we didn't have time to practice grammar as process, and therefore I wonder how much of today's lesson students will retain. It has become painfully clear that grammar instruction takes lots and lots of time."

With the week of grammar teaching, testing, and student and personal journaling completed, I put my energy into compiling the data and administering the second oral post-test. The results were not astounding, and yet within the data, I discovered fascinating bits of information which I never expected to find.

V. RESULTS

Both the data from the written tests, which I gave to the whole class, and the oral tests, which I gave to the five participants, are charted on the attachment (see next page). The first chart shows the results of the oral testing with the five participants. Only participant A did not make any progress between the pre-test and the post-test. "A's" scores were high to begin with, partially because her grammar is excellent, but also because she received grammar instruction on the same topic from another teacher immediately before the pre-test. Participant B took the testing very seriously. "B" spent extra time outside of the class studying the grammar, and as a result, her scores more than doubled. Participant C made modest gains in spite of the fact that he seemed somewhat depressed throughout the testing period. Participant E was more focused on work than on class, and yet he made modest gains. Participant F surprised me the most. "F" has lived in the U.S. for 24 years, and much of her grammar has fossilized. However, she more than doubled her oral scores.

The results of the written tests among the five participants are shown on the second graph.

Oral Testing with Participants A, B, C, E, and F

	A	B	C	E	F
Pre-Test	27	11	13	21	7
Post-Test	27	26	17	26	16
2nd Post Test	25	23	16	26	14

*The highest score possible is 34.

Written Testing with Participants A, B, C, E, and F

	A	B	C	E	F
Pre-Test	27	19	19	29	5
Post-Test	29	14	24	?	15
2nd Post-Test	26	27	28	29	8

*The highest score possible (including extra credit) is 31.

Written Testing for the Whole Class Including Participants A, B, C, E, and F

	Pre-Test	First Post-Test	Second Post-Test
Average score for students who took the pre-test and the first post-test.	21.21	22.36	
Average score for students who took the pre-test and the second post-test.	23.75		26.5
Average score for students who took all three tests.	22.56	25	25.67

*The average scores for the students who took all three tests are also included in either column one or column two. The highest score possible (including extra credit) is 31.

Only two participants showed gains on both of the post-tests. However, all but one of the participants made improvements on at least one of the post-tests. The last chart shows the results for the written testing for the full class. The least amount of gains occurred between those who took the pre-test and the first post-test. This is because one student dropped from a 17 on the pre-test to a three on the post-test since he got confused during Thursday's frustrating lesson on equatives.

There was an unanticipated result from this study. At times, the students' written or oral work made it apparent that although they had not mastered the new form, they were reshuffling their internal grammatical structures. For example, participant F did not even attempt to use the superlative in her oral pre-test. However, in her second oral post-test, "F" said, "tallest than," and "olderest than." Another example of grammatical restructuring comes from the oral testing of participant C. In the pre-testing, this is his only attempt at an equative: "Two cans of milk the same. However, in the second post-test, "C" said, "The cardinal is as not nearly as tall as man in suit." One more example of this grammatical shuffling is taken from a class member's written testing. In the pre-test, he did not use descriptive adverbs such as "almost, not quite, exactly, not, and just about" with the form "as + adj + as." However, in the first post-test, he wrote sentences such as, "Sakina's weight as nearly as Khoa weight" and "Khoa is not as the others age." All three of these examples indicate that students were experimenting with the new grammatical structures, even if they were not always used correctly.

It is clear that although the students were not always able to produce an error free sentence, their grammar usage had been changed as a result of the teaching intervention. Ellis (1997) writes about this phenomenon: "Formal instruction results in faster and more successful language learning and yet learners often fail to learn what they have been taught. This can be explained by positing that formal instruction contributes primarily to explicit knowledge which can facilitate later development of implicit knowledge. In other words, it will often have a delayed rather than an immediate effect" (p. 131). It could be that at a later time, certain constructs related to this unit on comparatives, superlatives and equatives will make more sense in the minds of the students than they do now.

From a teacher's perspective, I am pleased that most of the students made gains between the oral and written pre and post testing. A bonus to this is that many of the students demonstrated that their internal grammar system had been shaken up, and they were attempting to re-formulate their grammatical diagram. Because of these factors, I feel satisfied with the results.

However, in retrospect, it is clear that this project could have been even more successful if I had made some changes in my teaching patterns and in the research project itself. First of all, since the students knew that I would be administering tests, some of them spent extra time studying at home. This creates the question of whether the gains were natural or non-typical. Secondly, none of the oral testing included activities in which the students were unaware that they were being graded. Dr. Aneta Pavlenko, my "Teaching the New Grammars" professor at Temple University, made a suggestion through E-mail near the beginning of my research: "Either you or another teacher could tape-record the students talking about a subject that would be familiar and typical enough that would dull their suspicions that you are trying to elicit specific forms but at the same time would be targeted at eliciting these forms." Unfortunately, I did not have time to implement this method of testing before I had begun teaching the unit on grammar for this project.

Thirdly, waiting a month and a half between the pre-test and the post-test was not enough time. There have been studies which show that the immediate gains students made after receiving instruction dropped to approximately half after six months (Lightbown, Spada and Wallace, 1980). Therefore, the students in my study may not be able to maintain their gains in the long run. Fourthly, I picked a difficult and confusing topic to teach. Using adjectives as comparatives, superlatives and equatives is no easy task. Since I taught all three forms within a week, some students got the various forms confused. Along with this, I did not give the students enough time to freely practice the forms. It was clear that the students needed more time to internalize these structures.

As a result of both the successes and failures of this project, I have learned a lot about the nature of research and about teaching grammar. It has been a valuable experience both for myself and for the five participants who received their taped transcripts in written form, and who had the opportunity to observe their own language learning progress.

VI. REFLECTION

With the results of the PA-ARN project in mind, it is now possible to discuss the problem statement: Will one week of teaching a specific grammatical point to five adult ESL class representatives in Lancaster city help them to improve their proficiency level to 80 percent of accuracy a month after the intervention? For the oral testing, the answer is clearly no. None of the five students received a score of 80% on any of the oral tests. However, on the written tests, all of the five students except participant F received a score of 80% or above on the second post-test. Interestingly, the base line I had chosen as an average for these five students was 20%. In other words, I expected the students to increase their scores by 60% between the pre-test and the second post-test. This was an extremely optimistic prediction. Overall, the students made modest increases relevant to their pre-test scores.

I would consider participating in a related PA-ARN project at some point in the future. If I did so, I would likely approach the research with some variations. First of all, I would reduce the number of participants in my research. Rather than testing the full class plus five class representatives, I would likely choose three students to represent the full class. This would allow me to analyze the results of the study in more detail. It would also enable me to maintain better control over the testing atmosphere in regards to the noise level and the sharing of answers. Secondly, I would not tell the students what grammar point I was testing them on so that they wouldn't spend an unusual amount of time preparing for the tests. Along with this, I would test the students informally so that they wouldn't be conscious of the grammar point I was researching. Thirdly, I would look more closely at how the students were restructuring their grammar, paying particular attention to the introduction of new constructs within their language usage. Finally, I would give the pre-test early in January in order to space the pre-test and the second post-test as far from each other as possible.

As stated earlier, during the planning phase of this research project, I wrote, "If this study shows that overt grammar teaching does not in any way improve the ability of students to communicate effectively, then I will either eliminate grammar teaching altogether or take a hard look at the way I teach grammar." What I did not realize when I wrote this statement was that whether or not the results showed positive gains in the students' test scores, it was impossible to do this research project without seriously analyzing my teaching. Although I mostly feel positive about the methods I used to teach comparatives, superlatives and equatives, the lessons could have been strengthened by allowing time for the students to experiment with the language. Interestingly, not only have I thought a lot about my teaching techniques, but also about the pattern of learning among my students. Frequently, throughout the testing, the students said or wrote a grammatically imperfect sentence, but it was evident that they were attempting to implement new forms into their personal grammar grid. This is related to the theory that students will many times enjoy the positive results of formal instruction at a delayed point in time. All of these learnings have proven to be invaluable as I continue in the process of becoming a better teacher and of learning more about the nature of students' learning patterns.

Reference List

Ellis, R. (1997). SLA Research and Language Teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Krashen, S.D. & Terrell, T.D. (1983). The Natural Approach. Hayward, California: The Alemany Press.

Lightbown, P., Spada, N., and Wallace, R. (1980). "Some effects of instruction on child and adolescent ESL learners' in Scarcella and Krashen (eds.) 1980.

Appendix

I. Written Consent Form.

II. Written First Post-Test.

III. Oral Testing Grading Sheet.

Written Consent

I agree to voluntarily participate in the 1998-1999 PAARN project administered by Timothy Shenk. I understand that the results of this project will be used by Timothy Shenk to write a research paper for his "Teaching the New Grammars" class at Temple University and that there is a possibility the results will be published. I am aware that PAARN participants, PAARN directors, Mr. Shenk's colleagues at Temple University and the Adult Enrichment Center, professors at Temple University, and any other interested persons may read the results of this study. I understand that my name will remain anonymous, but the data collected about my grammar usage will be used by Mr. Shenk for his research project.

____
signature of PAARN participant

PAARN Research Project First Post-Test

Directions: Fill in the blanks by completing the word or writing a word. Then circle either true or false. Use the chart to help you find the information you need.

example: Dahabo is as quiet as Fernando. *[✓ true]* *false*

1. Khoa is _______ assertive than Carlos. true false
2. Sakina is _____ youngest person in the group. true false
3. Carlos is as _____ as Thomas. true false
4. Sakina's eyes are light_____ than Thomas' eyes. true false
5. Fernando is almost as heavy _____ Khoa. true false
6. Carlos is _____ lightest person in the group. true false

Directions: Write sentences about the following people. Use the chart to find the information which each of the following questions asks for. Write superlative (tallest), equative (as tall as) and comparative (taller) sentences. The true and false sentences may give you an example of how to write these sentences.

example: Hanae/Thomas/height
sentence: Hanae is taller than Thomas.

1. Dahabo/Fernando/personality
2. Fernando/hair color
3. Sakina/khoa/weight
4. Hanae/Sakina/personality
5. Khoa/age
6. Hanae/Dahabo/eye color

Name	Age	Height	Hair	Eyes	Weight	Personality
Khoa	11	5'0"	blonde	brown	160	assertive
Carlos	30	4'8"	gray	green	210	a little assertive
Fernanda	23	5'9"	black	gray	159	quiet
Hanae	31	6'2"	light brown	black	98	very loud
Sakina	75	5'9"	gray	blue	125	loud
Thomas	30	5'5"	blonde	light blue	200	mean
Dahabo	16	5'2"	brown	black	180	quiet

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PARTICIPANT F PRE-TEST:	SCORE	MAXIMUM
COMPARATIVES:		
1 SYLLABLE/ 2 SYLLABLES PLUS Y:		*3*
2 OR MORE SYLLABLES:		*4*
SUPERLATIVES:		
1 SYLLABLE/2 SYLLABLES PLUS Y:		*3*
2 OR MORE SYLLABLES:		*4*
EQUATIVES:		
ANY # OF SYLLABLES:		*3*
ANY # OF SYLLABLES:		*3*
USE OF ADVERBS (ALMOST, NOT QUITE, ETC.)		*2*
SENTENCE COMPREHENSIBILITY AND SENSIBILITY:		*12*
TOTAL POINTS:		*34*

PARTICIPANT F FIRST POST-TEST:	SCORE	MAXIMUM
COMPARATIVES:		
1 SYLLABLE/ 2 SYLLABLES PLUS Y:		*3*
2 OR MORE SYLLABLES:		*4*
SUPERLATIVES:		
1 SYLLABLE/2-SYLLABLES PLUS Y:		*3*
2 OR MORE SYLLABLES:		*4*
EQUATIVES:		
ANY # OF SYLLABLES:		*3*
ANY # OF SYLLABLES:		*3*
USE OF ADVERBS (ALMOST, NOT QUITE, ETC.)		*2*
SENTENCE COMPREHENSIBILITY AND SENSIBILITY:		*12*
TOTAL POINTS:		*34*

PARTICIPANT F SECOND POST-TEST:	SCORE	MAXIMUM
COMPARATIVES:		
1 SYLLABLE/ 2 SYLLABLES PLUS Y:		*3*
2 OR MORE SYLLABLES:		*4*
SUPERLATIVES:		
1 SYLLABLE/2 SYLLABLES PLUS Y:		*3*
2 OR MORE SYLLABLES:		*4*
EQUATIVES:		
ANY # OF SYLLABLES:		*3*
ANY # OF SYLLABLES:		*3*
USE OF ADVERBS (ALMOST, NOT QUITE, ETC.)		*2*
SENTENCE COMPREHENSIBILITY AND SENSIBILITY:		*12*
TOTAL POINTS:		*34*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

KEY TO THE TRANSCIPTS:

** I said the words and sentences which are underlined.*
** Extra comments and observations are placed in brackets.*

PARTICIPANT A PRE-TEST:

The man who is wearing white cap is the tallest.

The woman who, who is wearing red shoes is as sad as the man.

The woman holding flower is mmm more beautiful than me.

The girl is more mischievious than the boy.

The girl has bigger eyes than the boy.

The woman who is wearing (?) glasses (or braces?) is the heftiest of them.

The girl keeping the ball is the messiest of them.

The woman happier than the man. Repeat that?. The The woman is as happy as the the man.

I think the red car is more expensive than the blue car.

All people except the man is more (adjusted) than the man. Are more adjusted? Are more comfortable maybe? All people except the man is more comfortably than the man.

A building is as taller, as tall as B building.

The red flowers are more beautiful than yellow flowers.

PARTICIPANT A FIRST POST-TEST:

The watch on the right is not as fancy than on the left.

Clinton is the tallest of them.

The boy who is wearing (?) (?) is the shyest of them.

The black woman is taller than white woman.

The man is happiest of them.

(incomprehensible sentence)

I think the red car is the most expensive among these car.

The man on the right is the heaviest of them.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

I think the man is as (incomprehensible).

The black basketball player is more active than white basketball player.

The boy on the car (actually a bus) is the most embarrassed in the family. (The family looks happy, not embarrassed).

The chimpanzee is stronger than the tiger (there is no tiger, only a man).

I think Hillary is the most impatient of them.

The bug on the left is brilliant, is more curious than the boy. (incomprehensible meaning).

The woman's left cheek is darker than woman's right cheek.

Clinton's coat is more warmer than the Oriental men.

The daughter is happiest, the daughter is the happiest in the family.

(incomprehensible sentence)

The car is fastest, the car is the fastest of them.

The bug on the left is stronger than the bug on the right.

The man is tallest in the family.

PARTICIPANT A SECOND POST-TEST:

White flower is white flower more blossom more than pink flower.

Woman who who is wearing black dress is fatter than white dress woman.

The pope is small than the man

The man who is wearing red t-shirt is the tallest of them

The right the man of the right decorated more than mans of the left.

A cat in the mi middle is the lightest color of them.

The Asian woman hair is the longest in all women.

The man is as happy as the woman.

Left side man beard is darker than right side.

The boy's skin is light than the man.

PARTICIPANT B PRE-TEST:

Ah, she, she ss dirtiest than everyone.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

She is sadder than both of...

She, she is she is very beautiful than than she.

The man smaller than (LONG PAUSE) It's o.k. just relax. The bed is better than this bed (BARELY COMPREHENSIBLE) Say it again. That's a mattress. The mattress is better than this (bed?).

The flower is beautiful than this flower.

(LONG PAUSE) You can talk about size, hair color. (B ASKS A QUESTION ABOUT A PICTURE) Crippled. (ANOTHER QUESTION) Yeah. I can stop it.

PARTICIPANT B FIRST POST TEST:

In this picture, the mother is taller than the girl, and the father is tallest.

In this picture, her hair is blacker than her mom hair.

And in this picture, the blue car is more beautiful and the red car is the most beautiful.

In this picture, the person, the man as is as tall as the person B.

In this picture, the the boy is smaller than the girl and the father is tallest.

In this picture, the person A is taller than the person B.

In this picture, the person A is as tall as person B.

The man on the left is is big as (?) the man on the left.

Her her hairs on the (ri ?) on the left dark as dark as the as, her hair on the left as dark as her hair on the left, right.

The person, the woman on the left (ss?) thin as the dark as the woman on the (?) on the right skin.

The child the child is not nearly as tall as her father.

Clinton is tallest in the group person.

In this picture, the girl is is tall is smaller than her mother.

PARTICIPANT B SECOND POST TEST:

In this pictures the woman on the left (ss?) smaller than the man on the right.

(Learner looks upset.) It's o.k. Say it again.

In this picture the the woman on the right is smaller than the man on the left. (correct information.)

In this picture, the man on the right is younger than the man on the left.

In this picture the woman on the left heavy, heavier than the woman on the right.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In this picture, cup coffee on the on the left exactly as full as the cup coffe on the ritght.

In this picture, the camera on the left exactly as beautiful as the camera on right. (Is a camera beautiful?)

In this picture, the the man on the the man on the left is taller than in group person.

In this pictures, her hair on the left is darker than her hairs on the right.

In this picture, his his face on the left is dark as as dark as dark his face on right.

Compare him to everybody...

In this picture, his face is darksness.

In this picture, the man in the middle, his face ... in this picture his face on the right is lighter skin is lighter than his face on the left.

In this pictures, the the pink flowers is more is beautiful and the white flower is the most beautiful yellow? and yellow flower is the most beautiful. (There are three sets of flowers. Apparently B said that two different sets of flowers are the most beautiful.)

In this picture the boy is not as tall as the jaguar.

In this picture, the bird is as small as the dog.

In this pictures, the dog is (?) exactly as strong as dog on the right.

In this picture, potato, tomato is as healthy as broccoli.

In this picture, the girl , her hair is , in this picture the girl on the left, her hair is darker than the boy on the rights hair.

PARTICIPANT C: PRE-TEST:

This woman, I think happy for this man. (ALMOST INCOMPREHENSIBLE) Repeat.

This woman the most happy for them, ah, this man between.

Two cans of milk the same. Again. Two cans of milk the same.

The Olympic, ah, champions very strong man, more stronger than ice-skating girl.

The man who sit, ah, the table, the most wet than another people.

Blue car I think, the most expensive, more expensive than red car.

Boy with ball dirtier than another children.

Three ladies looks happier than man behind them.

The lady who wearing the black dress smaller than another girl than.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PARTICIPANT C POST TEST:

The man with key is not nearly as tall as man with big ears.

The big Bill Clinton the taller than all of (?).

Patient is not nearly as dark as the (daughter ?).

The jungle man is almost as strong as orangatang.

Beside the pair of shoes darker than between of them. Repeat. Right side and left side pair of shoes more dark, darker than between of them.

PARTICIPANT C SECOND POST-TEST:

The woman had black dress more heavy, heavier than (?) white

The mans almost as tall as all of (?).

The skin in black man darkness in the skin person (?).

The left side lady the most serious seriously than lady with cigarette.

The kid gets more friendly than (?).

The cardinal is as not nearly as tall as man in suit.

The left cup exactly as full as right cup of coffee.

Participant E PRE-TEST:

In the picture, where the boys look like playing soccer, the Chinese boy is the most dirtiest, is ... is the dirtiest of all of them.

The girl in this picture is happiest, is the happiest, is most happy than the boy.

The (?), the both gallon of milk is is heavy as the other one, is heavy (?) the other one.

In the picture, the three men are the same, and the blonde girl is the most beautiful of them, of them.

The new (borkee ?) (bosow ?) whatever is the, is the best, in that (style ?) I guess.

The woman is black is the smallest of the, of them. And the girl in white shirt is the tallest of the three, but the guy with shirt, with grey shirt is taller than, than the black, (?) the black, the woman with the black shirt.

All of three have flowers.

The man with the pink hat built like he hit something real hard.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In that picture, everyone is on the bed except the man with glasses is sit on the bed, not sleeping, or something.

The buildings are the equals.

PARTICIPANT E FIRST POST-TEST:

The the gorilla is bigger than the man.

The boy with the yellow shirt is the smallest in that group.

The woman with the ball has , the woman with the ball, her hair is lighter than the woman with the black shirt.

The man with the mustache is bigger, is taller than than the other man.

The (?) clock, the clock is as as big as the oth as the other clock. (Actually watches)

The black woman is taller is taller than the other woman, but the woman with the white hair is old older than the black woman.

Bill Clinton is the tallest of that group.

The man with the white in the white shirt is taller than the woman. The kid in the bus (on the bus) is the smallest of all of them.

The old man is happier than the boy, than the young man, but the the lady with the pink shirt is the happiest of all of them.

Both woman are, the woman with the red hair is as tall as the yellow, as the woman with the yellow hair.

The black shoes are smallers smaller than the than the other shoes.

The box of cigarette are as big as the as the others.

The black girl is more beautiful than the than the (super?) girl. (E seems to be referring to a black haired girl).

In the cartoon the the taller, the tallest man (only two men) has bigger ears than the other guy, than the other guy.

PARTICIPANT E SECOND POST-TEST:

The woman with the black dress is heavier than the woman with the white white dress.

The cups have the as the same as the other one.

The camera with the picture is as heavy as the other camera.

The man is more happy than the woman.

The girl with the the girl with the blue shirt is the happiest in the group.

The dog is bigger than the than the bird.

In the picture with the a lot of mens, the both guys in the middle aren't as tall as the other ones.

The eyes of the grey cat are the light lightest in the group.

The cat is bigger than the fish.

The dog in the bed, the dog ears are bigger than the the other dog in the white picture.

The woman with the cigarette is happier than the Japanese girl.

Participant F PRE-TEST:

This car is big (?) (?) a blue one.

The tiger killed the lion.

The boy in the middle is as angry than the girl.

The lady is sad (?) (?) as the other one.

The boy is high as the girl. (INCORRECT INFO.)

The ring as smaller the big pin.

The man in the middle as as sick (?) the one on (?) right.

The boy on the (?) as happy the boy on the left.

The man on the couch as happy the one that lay down. (CANNOT SEE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF THOSE LYING ON THE MATTRESSES.)

The woman is on the top as the man

The man as smile the other one.

The (?) towers as the same.

The red flowers as beautiful the green ones.

The lady (?) as as high (?) the man.

The lady in the middle as walk, walking the man.

The lady as smile the other one.

(INCOMPREHENSIBLE SENTENCE)

The little girl as painful than the boy.

PARTICIPANT F FIRST POST TEST:

The the the red cars is bigger is bigger than the brown car.

The man on the left side is taller than than the right.

These four people, the man, he is more taller than the other three.

The woman the woman is is taller than the girl.

The boy is near (?) taller than the man.

The lady her hair is long than the next to her.

The nurse aide is is a little dark (that ?) the white woman.

The face, the man face is sad than the left man.

President Clinton is taller than the other people.

Miss Clinton the Chinese man as the same as the same as the other (?) people.

The girl, she is taller than the boy. The boy hair is dark than the girl's hair.

The lady is the smile than the lady next to her.

The man hug the woman, the lady is taller than the boy. The boy is more taller than the bus (The boy is on the bus). The boy is esmaller than us.

The lady face is light than the (?). The red face. (incomprehensible)

The black face is is smaller than the brown and red face.

The mon the monkey is a strong stronger than the man.

The left watch is bigger than the left, the right.

The shoes is longer than the other one. (No details of which shoes)

(Terminated Transcription: It went on for awhile)

PARTICIPANT F SECOND POST-TEST:

The broccoli is healthy as as the tomato.

The pope is more religion than Fidel.

The lady in the bus is fatter than the one (?) left. (The women are on a scale).

The cat is bigger as the other one.

The dog is a strong than the cat.

The man in the middle is taller as (?) right. (The man in the middle appears to be a bit shorter.)

The man is sad than the boy.

The children they are happy the one in the glasses.

The dog is bigger than as the bird.

(Incomprehensible)

The cat the cat is bigger than the fish.

The Indian in the middle is little happy than one the left.

The cat in the top is bigger than the second one.

The camera on the right is (incomprehensible)

The lady in the left is a little sadly at the other one

The lady in the middle is happy (er/est?) the one in the right.

The people the last man on the other group is taller, tallest than the other ones. The man is is laughing (more than ?) the second one.

The man in the right is olderest than the third one.

(Terminated Transcription)

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Developing An Intense Goal-Setting Portion of Student Orientation: Helping Students to Focus on Their Goals and Remain With GPLC Until Those Goals Are Achieved

Action Researcher's Name:

Sue Snider

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network: Staff Development Through Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Pennsylvania Action Research Monograph

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940's. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council (GPLC) is an urban, volunteer-based literacy program which concentrates on helping adults improve their reading, writing, and math skills. Being volunteer-based, we do not have scheduled classes, rather we tutor when the student is available. Ours is a goal driven program. Students entering the literacy program should understand why they are there, what GPLC can do for them, and how they can apply themselves to get the maximum benefit from their tutoring sessions. This is why the new student orientation was developed. Realizing that goal setting is extremely important to a student's success, I randomly chose 15 students to be interviewed about the contents of the orientation. The interview included questions about the handouts and their effectiveness. I then began work on a new segment dedicated to goal setting which included more in-depth handouts and even an interactive section. Over the two months that I concentrated on this effort, I kept notes on reactions from the students. With the cooperation of the neighborhood coordinators, 37 randomly chosen students were asked 5 questions about goal setting during their initial interview as they entered the program. What I found out was that although many students already had made their mind up as to what goals they should pursue, an overwhelming amount of students did find the handouts very helpful in deciding what their goals were going to be. These results have given me reason to permanently keep this portion of the orientation intact, keep it fresh by occasionally adding new handouts, and continue to stress the correlation between thoughtful goal setting and achieving one s goal.

II. PROBLEM

Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council (GPLC) is a non-profit adult-based literacy program which offers instruction in basic literacy skills, ABE/GED, English as a second language (ESL), workplace literacy, and family literacy. It now also offers students the services of a computer learning center where adult learners may advance their knowledge in technology. Serving the greater Pittsburgh area with one main office and eight neighborhood offices, GPLC serves its students by addressing their learning needs and teaching to their goals.

My job as Student/Tutor Support Coordinator includes delivering to prospective students a 1 and V2 hour informational orientation session about the program. During this time, I try to allay any fears and answer all questions students might have about the program. Since I began delivering this orientation about two years ago I became concerned with two factors which I felt were intertwined. First was the time factor and second was what I felt was an increasing need to further develop an in-depth piece on goal setting to stress its importance to the students' success in the program. As I watched prospective students become increasingly fidgety or fall asleep during my presentation, I realized something had to be done. I wanted to reduce the time the orientation took, but I also wanted to insert a new piece on goal setting. What I decided to do was to develop a new segment on goal setting while combining several other parts of the orientation. In this way, I was able to include the new material without sacrificing the integrity of the rest of the presentation.

Students who come to the orientation are not automatically entered into the program. That is a decision they make when the orientation is over. By revamping the presentation, I had hoped to add enough of an upbeat attitude about goal setting and success that more students would indeed enter our program and eventually stick with it until they had accomplished all of their goals. I felt that by stressing the importance of thorough, realistic, and measurable goal setting, the students would be entering the program with their eyes wide open. This would benefit not only the student, but his/her tutor as well, as there would be a mutual understanding of what the student wanted to accomplish and why. I hoped that by realistically addressing their goals, students would concentrate more on those goals and less on the time it would take to accomplish them.

III. PLANNING

My intervention plan included writing a new goal setting piece to include in the orientation. I began in November 1998 to develop a telephone questionnaire that would ask former students their opinions about the orientation. I was anxious as to what they would have to say about the time factor and if they were using any of the handouts. I enlisted the help of some Literacy AmeriCorps members to do the phoning. I randomly choose 15 students who had previously attended the orientation. They were asked a series of 10 questions (Appendix A). While the calls were being made, I was investigating where I could get some interesting handouts pertaining to goal setting. I collected materials such as daily affirmations, materials from Laubach Literacy Action, and some things that I made up myself, until the end of the year. I unveiled my new presentation beginning with the orientations in January and decided to continue with it until the end of February. During that time, I began to collect field notes and keep a journal recording the reactions from the students. I know each group is very different from the next and so I was anxious to compare reactions to the new segment.

It made sense to enlist the help of several Literacy AmeriCorps members to get honest answers from the former orientation attendees. Since the AmeriCorps members were not familiar with the orientation, I had to coach them about what answers to expect from the students. At the beginning of the interview, the students were assured that we would not use their names, only their answers. Only two of the 15 students did not want to participate.

My baseline was taken from the responses I got from the telephone interviews. I was concerned with the fact that maybe the students found the orientation too long. If that were the case, and I was now planning to add new material, I had to be careful as to how I delivered the rest of the presentation. Sixty-two percent of those who answered said it was not too long, so that was encouraging. Although 47% of the students felt the handouts were useful, I found out that only 24% of the students interviewed used the goal setting handouts. Because I was about to spend so much time on writing and delivering this segment, I wanted to increase this number to 50% of the students using these handouts. I knew some students would forget what was said, but if they referred to the handouts, by reading them again before making a plan or just by filling them out before their first meeting with the area coordinator, maybe it could assist them in deciding how to accomplish their goal setting plan.

My criteria for success would be the results of another shorter questionnaire (Appendix H) that the neighborhood coordinators would help me with. At the students' initial entry interview, they were asked about the goal setting portion of the orientation. For my project to be a success, I wanted to know that at least 50% of those interviewed used the handouts given to them.

My problem statement is: Will adding new handouts focusing on the goal setting segment of the orientation help 50% more prospective students decide on their goals?

IV. ACTION

I decided to add the new segment on goal setting during the first orientation presented in January and kept it in until the end of February. I began with the piece I originally used (Appendix B) which started the student to think about long- and short-term goals. At this time, I passed out pencils assuring students that this would not be collected, but rather it was for their use only. I wanted to reinforce the idea that if they wrote something down, it might be easier to commit to and remember. At this time, I also reminded them that a goal did not have to be a big undertaking, but rather something that would make them happy with themselves when they accomplished it.

In the new segment, I spent little time on Appendix B and went right to the ladders (Appendices C and D). In case there was still some confusion, I wanted to visually represent goals with the "step by step" approach of climbing a ladder. I asked the students to look at both ladders and decide which one best represented the goals they had for themselves. As I handed them out, I assured them that it did not matter which ladder they picked, explaining that some people, at first, have fewer goals than others. I pointed out to them that the message was the same for each handout, because the approach for success, long- or short-term was handled in the same manner. It was at this point that I would get the students to get involved verbally in the presentation. By using myself as an example, I always picked the short ladder. I liked it because it was cute and because my goal of losing weight was, hopefully, a short-term one. (Talking about weight and letting the students know I had a goal too made this segment real.) Almost all of the groups laughed at this comment, so I immediately pointed to someone and asked what their goal was, reminding them that it was to be something that made them happy and feel good about themselves. This interaction got the students to think more about why they were here in the first place and everyone at every session participated in this segment. My example of going first and then involving the group seemed to loosen everyone up. It set an informal tone for the rest of the orientation.

I do read a daily affirmation and, after explaining what an affirmation is, I pointed out that once again, we have the ladder concept tied to goal setting and achieving that goal. (Appendix E) When talking about success, it's not a bad idea to discuss failure. That's where the "Don't Be Afraid to Fail" (Appendix F) handout comes in. Students should know we don't expect them to be perfect and they won't be. They need to be reminded that sometimes they can learn more from their mistakes. The last handout, (Appendix G), comes from Toni Cordell at Laubach Literacy Action. This piece came across my desk last summer and it is meant to be distributed to students. What better place to get the point of prioritizing goals across than at a session like this? I tell each group that when I read the first paragraph I almost killed myself trying to get to a phone to call this bank because I was quite sure that I could spend $86,400 a day! At least I wanted to give it a try! (Again, humor cuts into the heavy goal setting topic and brings everything into reality.) Prioritizing is such an important part of goal setting and this handout puts everything in perspective. I don't go over the poem in this handout. I concentrate on how Toni tells the students to prioritize their goals. This handout also gives me a chance to explain what a New Reader is and how this woman is helping others just like herself better their lives.

I had no problems presenting this new segment. Even though it was always done in the same way, depending upon the involvement of the students, it sometimes went over the time limit I had imposed on it, but the other materials got covered because I was able to incorporate them into the presentation. In this way, I felt I didn't have to compromise the integrity of the presentation, while still covering all the necessary information the students needed.

V. RESULTS

Thirteen people were contacted for the initial phone interview, some of them gave more than one answer to the question asked and I counted each answer given in the results. In the same vein, some of the students contacted did not answer some of the questions asked, so I calculated the answers from the responses I received. Some of the most important information I gleaned from this interview is represented by the following tables.

Table 1
Question #4a: Were the handouts useful?

Yes	**47%**
No	**15%**
Didn't answer	**38%**

It was helpful for me to know that 47% of the students felt the handouts were useful. I did concentrate on finding and/or developing handouts that were not too complicated, yet were easy to read and zeroed in on the goal setting theme. It was my intent to make sure they would be used as future resources whenever the student decided which path to follow when planning his/her goal(s).

Table 2
Question #4b: Were there too many of them?

Too many	26%
Just enough	5%
Didn't look through them yet	5%
Didn't answer	64%

Even though 26% thought there were too many handouts, I was still encouraged. We did go over each handout during the orientation, so maybe the 5% who didn't look through them meant they were going to review what we had done.

Table 3
Question #5: Which handouts have you or will you used?

How to set goals	24%
Not sure	24%
Need to go through them	24%
Computer center	9%
Used more than half of them	9%
Used all of them	9%

After getting the information on the amount of handouts, I wanted to know which handouts they used, if any at all. I was encouraged that even 24% mentioned the goal setting handouts by name. I was even encouraged to see that 9% used all of them.

Table 4
Question #2: Was the session too long?

No	62%
Yes	38%

I was anxious to know how the students perceived the length of the presentation because I certainly didn't want to increase the time with the new segment. I was delighted to find out that 62% felt the session was not too long. It's always a concern that the integrity of some material might be compromised when revising or adding a new section to the presentation. Tables 4 and 5 helped me decide that I needed to incorporate information together so as to include all the pertinent information the prospective students needed.

Table 5
Question #3: What could have been taken out to make it shorter?

Nothing	**60%**
Less handouts	**20%**
Repeated too many things	**20%**

I thought it was interesting that 20% of the students thought I repeated too many things. At least if they felt I repeated too many things, maybe some of the information stayed with them.

Table 6
Question #11: Please give me your overall impression of the orientation.

Everything was explained well	**30%**
It was helpful and informative	**20%**
It was too long	**20%**
It was not long enough	**20%**
I wanted more information on learning	**10%**

It amused me that 20% thought the presentation was too long and 20% thought it was not long enough! It's difficult sometimes to gauge how the audience will react since there are different participants each time.

The questions that were asked of the students who completed the orientation in 1999, (Appendix H), were more geared to the goal setting portion of the presentation.

Table 7

Question #1: Sue defined goals as "something that makes you feel good about yourself." Once you heard that, was it easier for you to decide what your goals would be?

Yes	49%
No	12%
Already Knew	30%
A Little	5%
No Difference	4%

The results of the first question that referred to how the students decided their goals surprised me in that 30% of the 39 people interviewed already knew what they wanted to do. I did not expect that such a low percentage of students came into the program sure of their goals.

Table 8

Question #3: What about the ladders? Which one do you think best describes your goals?

Longer ladder	53%
Short ladder	47%

In Question #3, "What about the ladders? Which one do you think best describes your goals?" I asked the students about the ladders because I wanted to see if they recognized the difference between long- and short-term goals. The long ladder represented long-term goals and for some of the students, many goals to be achieved. The short ladder not only represented short-term goals, but for some, goals that could be achieved quickly. I was encouraged to see that 53% described the long ladder as representing their goals because it meant that many of the students realized that this process would take time. I hope this means they will concentrate on the goal and not on how long it will take to achieve it.

There were many answers for Question #4, "Before the orientation, what were your goals?" 37% said they wanted to get their GED. The next highest was 10% who wanted to read and write better. There were so many answers to this question that I cannot list them all, but one thing that did surprise me was that 7% of those questioned said they had no plans for the future. This seemed to be in stark contrast to the 30% of students who responded to Question #1, (Table 7), by answering that they already knew what they wanted to do before coming to the orientation. Some other answers to this question were:

- "To get my driver's license"
- "To read the newspaper"
- "To pass the civil service test"
- "To own my own business"
- "To do math better"
- "To get new skills"
- "To improve my life"
- "To learn more and more"

Table 9

Question #5: How did Sue's presentation help you decide what goals you want to work on?

I already knew what I wanted to do	**29%**
It inspired me to work	**16%**
It confirmed that GPLC could help me	**13%**
It gave me confidence	**13%**

Question #5, "How did Sue's presentation help you decide what goals you want to work on?" helped them decide what they wanted to do and is different from the first question on goal setting. This question was asked to see if after the entire presentation the student decided on a goal, decided on another goal, or just kept the goal(s) he/she came in with. Once again, 29% of the students who responded to this question already knew what they wanted to do and were determined to do it. Five percent of the students' plans stayed the same and 5% still didn't know what their goals were.

Some of the other varied answers were:

- "Gave me confidence"
- "Helped me to think about what to improve on first"
- "The video showed me that other people have my same problem with reading."
- "Sue was honest and down to earth during the presentation."

The most important question I asked was if the handouts helped. Here are the results:

Table 10
Did you find the handouts helpful in deciding what your goals were?

Yes	**91%**
No	**6%**
Kind of	**3%**

Table 10 definitely let me know that my project was a success. I only wanted 50% of the students to say the handouts were helpful, so when 91% indicated this, I was elated! This had to mean that the handouts were working and it proved to me that all the time I spent choosing what I had hoped were the right ones, actually were.

Looking over the results of these questions has led me to make the decision to keep this segment in the orientation. During the presentations, I have seen students following along with me and some of them go back to the first page to write down their long- and short-term goals when that segment concluded or before they left. Before I added this in-depth segment, I noticed that students just gathered the papers together and didn't bother to review them or even write on them. I feel successful, too, because many students are coming up to me and thanking me for the presentation. This is something I never experienced before. It's gratifying to know the students appreciated what I was trying to do for them.

VI. REFLECTION

The impact on my problem has been tremendous. I feel this has been a successful project and it has enabled me to conduct the orientation in a more informal way. I've always tried to use humor to lighten up a heavy subject like goal setting. Now, when I use humor by relating to a personal experience which involves my own goals and personal convictions, it seems to encourage student participation. I used to see students come in and sit down and not look at anybody, but since I have added the interactive part, students are staying to talk to me and, more importantly, to each other. I think this project has enabled students to understand that they are not alone and everybody has to start with a good plan.

When I started to do this portion of the presentation, I wanted participation, but I never envisioned such success. Of course, every session was different because different people attended, but each session carried a similar feeling that brought the group together. As I mentioned before, not one person balked when I asked them what their goal was. While one person was speaking, I would glance around the group and I could see people paying attention to each other and eager to tell their goal. (Some didn't just stop at one goal. Some decided to tell stories about their triumphs and failures. That was all right. It was working!) I also felt it was important that I let them know I had goals too. I have been inspired by the people who came up to me after the orientation and thanked me for something I said or told me that they feel better about themselves now because of what they heard during the presentation. Many students still leave as soon as it's over, but more and more are staying just to talk to me or to another student. More importantly, students are staying to check current addresses and phone numbers so they won't miss the important call from their area coordinator to come in for that initial interview to begin the process of entering the program. I can see a determination on their faces and I am so proud to know I have been a part in helping them plan their goals.

I look upon the orientation as a process and a work in progress. I don't ever want it to stagnate. Because I deliver it so frequently, I want to keep it fresh and alive. I want to keep looking for new and interesting materials for the prospective students. I will definitely keep this segment in the presentation, but I will also keep looking for other handouts to supplement it. I want to do more involving the students.

The more the students can participate, the more they will take away with them, and the more they will remember. Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council (GPLC) is a goal oriented program that, beginning with the orientation, encourages students to take an active part in their development. With this expanded interactive segment, I am able to reinforce this idea.

Last year's project dealt with the orientation process, as this one did. Next year, I still would like to further investigate my practice with another project where I would follow those students who came in with a specific goal and find out how they are progressing and if they are achieving the original goal they set out to accomplish. If I could pursue this project, I feel the results would be as beneficial to the students as they would be to me.

Appendix A
Side 1

Questionnaire for Former Orientation Participants

I am calling on behalf of Sue Snider, the person who presented your orientation session. She wants to improve it and feels that by asking your opinion, she can do just that. Do you have about 5 minutes to answer a few questions? May we use your answers when collecting the information from all the interviews? I want to assure you that your name will not appear anywhere. We want you to be honest. Sue can only improve the orientation if you speak your mind and give honest answers.

1. What do you remember from the orientation?
   (You should get answers like goal setting, anything about one-to-one tutoring, small group tutoring, places where tutor and student meet, Fellowship group, etc.)

2. Was the session too long?

3. What could have been taken out to make it shorter?

4. Were the handouts useful? Were there too many of them?

5. Which handouts have you or will you use?

Appendix A
Side 2

6. Was enough time spent on goal setting? Do you understand the difference between a long-term and a short-term goal?

7. How about the video? Was it useful to see how those students were helped?

8. Was the room comfortable? Could you see and hear okay?

9. Have you looked at the handbook by yourself or with someone since the orientation?

10. Do you feel you were prepared for the interview with your coordinator or the volunteer interviewer because of the material covered at the orientation?

11. Please give me your overall impression of the orientation. (You should get responses like it was too long or it was interesting, etc.)

Thank you for taking your time to talk to me. If there is anything we can do for you, please call us at 661-7323.

Appendix B

Sample Goal Setting Worksheet

1. **Long-term goal(s)**

2. **Short-term goal**

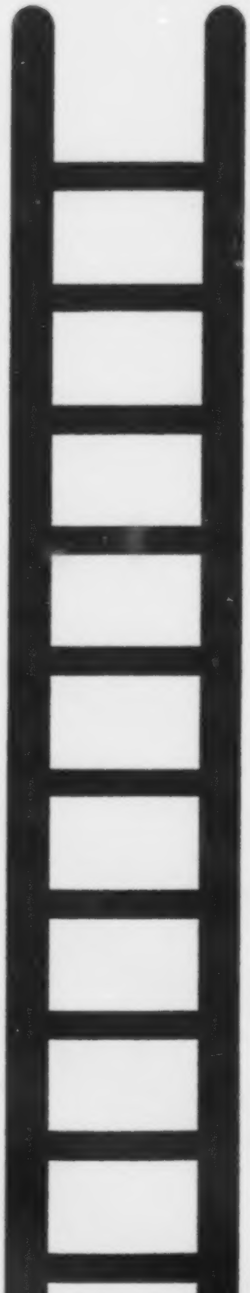
   Short-term goal

What do you need to do to get to this goal?

Appendix C

Ladder of Success

Remember:



Take it:

One step at a time, one day at a time.

Be:

reasonable and flexible.

Give yourself a chance to change and have faith in yourself.

Keep trying and NEVER give up!!

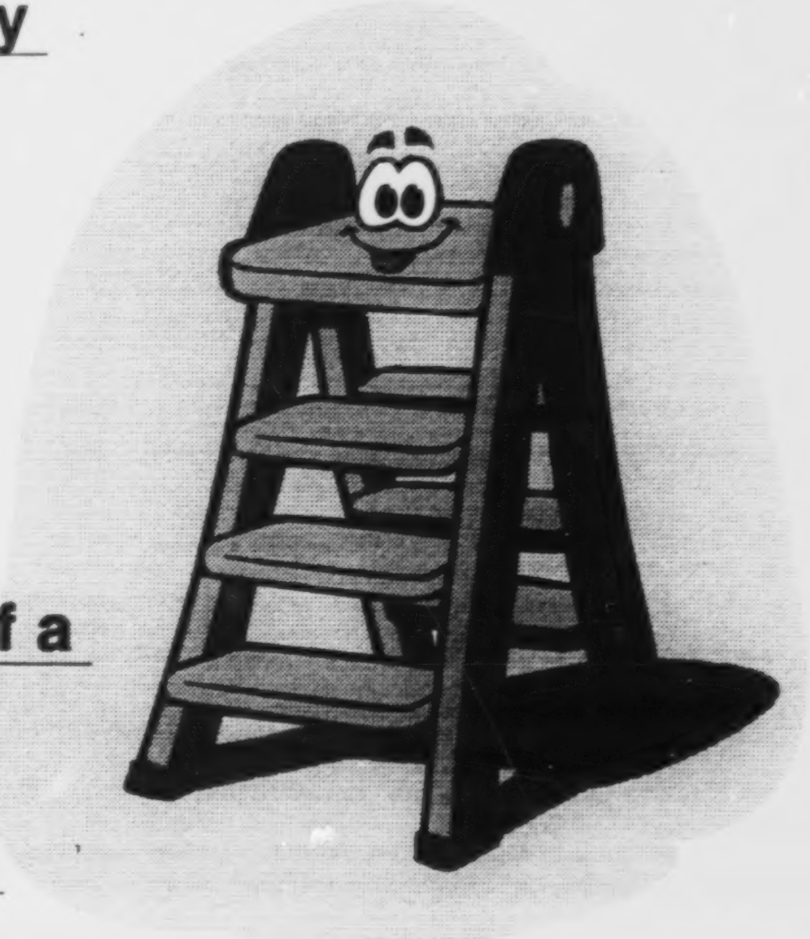
Appendix D

Ladder of Success

Remember:

Take it:

One step at a time, one day at a time.



Be:

reasonable and flexible.

Give yourself a chance to change and have faith in yourself.

Keep trying and NEVER give up!!

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix E

December 27

Step after step the ladder is ascended.
—George Herbert

It's not uncommon to hold certain individuals in awe because they have turned some of our own long-held dreams into spectacular reality. We listen in amazement as a friend joyfully describes her latest triathlon. We secretly envy our co-worker's multilinguality. And we greatly admire a neighbor who has succeeded in a career we once dreamed of pursuing.

From our point of view, each of these achievements seems overwhelmingly difficult, if not impossible. Indeed, that is what has kept us from learning the new language or sport, or embarking on the new career.

But if we were to talk at length with those individuals we admire, we would find that the secret of their success is readily available. We would learn that virtually any large challenge can be broken down into a series of smaller ones. If we focus our energy on each step leading to the ultimate goal, we are likely to succeed. If, however, we focus on the overall "impossibility" of reaching our objective, we are bound to fail.

By approaching challenges step by step, just about anything we take on will become more manageable and enjoyable. We will make progress without realizing it and be amazed by our expanding capabilities.

THOUGHT FOR TODAY: One step at a time, one day at a time, my goal is achievable.

from At My Best by J.B.W.

Appendix F

Don't Be Afraid to Fail

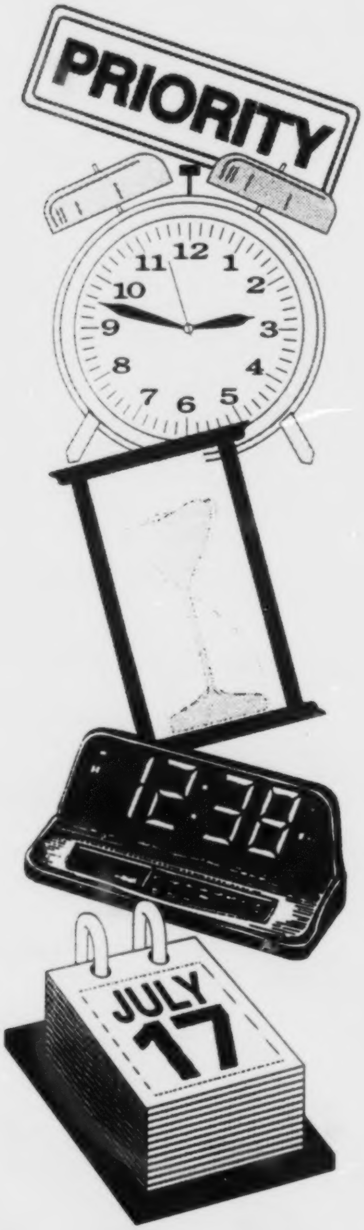
- You've failed many times, although you may not remember.
- You fell down the first time you tried to walk.
- You almost drowned the first time you tried to swim, didn't you?
- Did you hit the ball the first time you swung the bat?
- Heavy hitters, the ones who hit the most home runs, also strike out a lot.
- R.H. Macy failed seven times before his store in NY caught on.
- English novelist John Creasey got 753 rejection slips before he published 564 books.
- Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times, but also hit 714 home runs.
- **Don't worry about failure. Worry about the changes you miss when you don't even try.**

Appendix G

Summer 1998

Side 1

nrsu
New Resources for Students' Use



Time and Time Again

by Toni Cordell, *New Reader Leadership Coordinator*

Imagine a bank that credits your account each morning with $86,400. This bank's rules are interesting. You must spend all of your money today. Anything you don't spend will not be there tomorrow.

What would you do if there really were a bank like that? You would draw out every cent, of course! Well, there really is a bank like that. It's called time.

Every morning you get a credit of 86,400 seconds. Every night the time you didn't use well is written off. This bank of time carries over no balance. It allows no overdrafts. Each day it opens a new account for you. Each night it burns the records of the day.

How will you spend today's 86,400 seconds to get the most from your life? Each of us must choose which activities and people are the most important.

For example, my job is very important to me. But at the end of every day I race home to spend time with my husband. My heart feels best when I enjoy quality time with those I love.

Benjamin Franklin worked out a way to manage time in simple steps. The first step is to decide what goals are important to you. Next, list the goals in the order of their importance.

Here is my list of goals:

- Learn to love God.
- Love my family and friends.
- Do my job well.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LAUBACH LITERACY ACTION
U.S. Program Division of Laubach Literacy
1320 Jamesville Avenue PO Box 131 Syracuse, NY 13210-0131 (315) 422-9121 Fax: (315) 422-6369 E-mail: tcordell@laubach.org

Appendix G

New Resources for Students' Use

Summer 1998

Side 2

- Keep healthy.
- Keep track of household tasks and family responsibilities.

What are your goals? Talk with your tutor or a friend or family member about them. Then make a list for yourself.

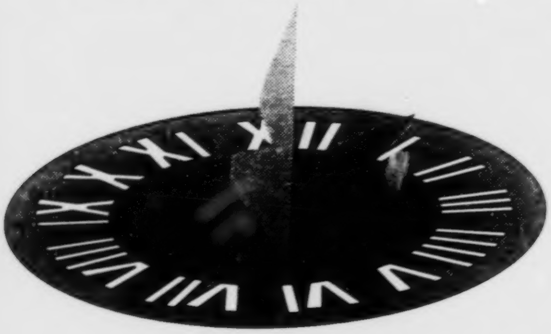
Every day, write down the things you need to do that day to meet each goal. Then list those things in three groups:

- very important (even urgent)
- important
- not very important (do if there is time)

Review your list of goals every few weeks or months. That way, you can always be sure that your daily activities reflect those goals.

You can drop or add goals. Best of all, you can check off the goals that you reach. Then it's time to celebrate!

A personal planning calendar can help you manage your time. Most office supply stores have a selection to choose from. You can also check your local library for books on time management.



The following untitled poem about time is adapted from Fran Bonardi, president of the Rotary Club of Charlottesville, Virginia.

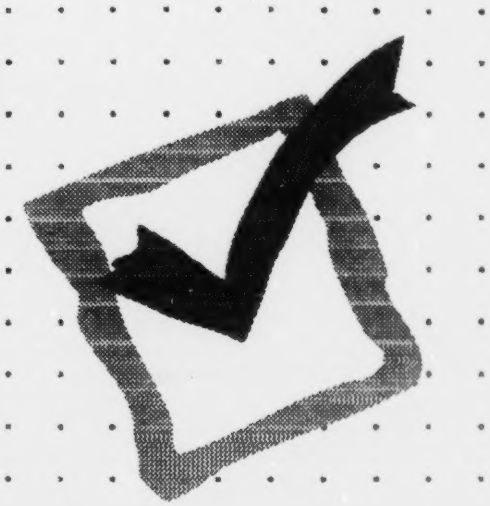
To realize the value of ONE YEAR,
Ask a student who has failed a grade.
To realize the value of ONE MONTH,
Ask a mother who has given birth to a premature baby.
To realize the value of ONE WEEK,
Ask the editor of a weekly newspaper.
To realize the value of ONE DAY,
Ask a daily wage worker who has kids to feed.
To realize the value of ONE HOUR,
Ask two lovers who are waiting to meet.
To realize the value of ONE MINUTE,
Ask someone who has missed a train.
To realize the value of ONE SECOND,
Ask someone who has won a silver medal in the Olympics.

Treasure every moment you have!
And treasure it more because you shared it with someone special, special enough to have your time ... and remember, time waits for no one.

YESTERDAY IS HISTORY ...
TOMORROW IS A MYSTERY ...
TODAY IS A PRESENT ... THE PRESENT.
ENJOY YOUR GIFT!

Appendix H

Follow [illegible]
on [illegible]



Please ask the following questions during the interview with your students who have completed orientations between 1/19/99 and 3/31/99. Thank you.

1. Sue defined goals as "something that makes you feel good about yourself." Once you heard that, was it easier for you to decide what your goals would be?

2. Did you find the handouts helpful in deciding what your goals were?

3. What about the ladders? Which one do you think best describes your goals? Why?

4. Before the orientation, what were your goals? (What made you decide to call GPLC?)

5. How did Sue's presentation help you decide what goals you want to work on?

Please return to Sue Snider no later than 4/2/99.

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION
able
PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

One-Size-Fits-All vs. Pick-And-Choose Format

Action Researcher's Name:

Valorie Taylor

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Pennsylvania Action Research Monograph

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940's. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

At present the majority of employment and training programs have consistently been designed as one-size-fits-all, leaving approximately 85% of all participants unsatisfied, unmotivated, or forced back into a job with no chance of advancement. In targeting a clientele representative of single parents and dislocated workers, my Action Research Project proposes providing an opportunity for participants to select instruction according to their own individual needs, thereby facilitating an atmosphere conducive to a more productive outcome. The goal being of the project is to promote independence. By empowering participants with supportive techniques customized to fit their individual aspirations, they can evaluate personal and current skill levels and that of the of market and career fields of today.

II. PROBLEM

It is the consensus of the powers that be, i.e. the government, that if all low to moderately low-income families currently receiving public assistance are registered in a one size fits all employment and training program that would not only ease the transition from welfare to work, but it would also make employment more accessible. My Action Research Project will attempt to challenge the notion represented by one-size-fits-all programs, by focusing on individualized instruction that provides choices for each individual according to need. To date, many who are enrolled in a one-size-fits-all program have little hope finding a job that best fits their current skill level. Due to lack of support, guidance and adequate account of individualized skill levels, participants either exit the program without finding employment or they take open positions that warrant 20 hours of work without learning anything, due to the goal being only to find a job, any job. My current title as Workplace Coordinator places me in a position to instruct participants from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds three times a week for a total of six hours. I have both men and women whose backgrounds are reflective of single parent families, low-income families and displaced workers. One of my responsibilities is to target individualized needs, i.e. low self-esteem, goal setting and other life skills and to make referral accordingly. This provides participants with more self awareness and the the facilitator with more insight into targeting individualized needs of participants, with an emphasis being placed on keeping them focused, challenged, comfortable and goal oriented.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

III. PLANNING

Intervention

My Action Research Project will begin in Mid-February 1999 with each session concluding at the end of 12 weeks. Due to the availability of individual choice instruction, completion will differ from one participant to the next. Presently this job skills program, Chance to Advance, is available at two different locations, with hopes of expanding to two additional sites in the near future along with in-kind childcare services being offered by the YMCA and the Literacy Project, during the summer months. The program will supply all necessary supplies, i.e. -- pencils, pens, paper and folders. In addition to job skills, related information, along with an introduction into self-esteem, decision making, goal setting, career & guidance and computer skills will be available. The implementation of various guest speakers will be announced on an as needed basis, during the 12 week session. The importance of regular attendance and participation will also be stressed and expected. Reasons for regular attendance are two fold: (1) participants will be held accountable for retrieving information according to schedule. (2) regular class attendance is stressed to all participants because it will demonstrate individual character, accountability and reliability.

Data Collecting Strategies

Through the use of field notes, journals and a portfolio the goal will be to make job seekers aware, of the benefits and success levels that can be obtained through the use of a program that targets specific individual needs. Thus, less time is spent on instruction, while increasing time spent looking for and locating employment reflective of their skills, knowledge and goals. Chance to Advance promises to equip each participant with the knowledge necessary to obtain a job/career that best fits the participants long and short term goals.

Baseline

All participants will be asked to take part in an evaluation/survey that will help in determining the need for Chance to Advance and its approach to choice instruction vs. the one-size fits all programs that instruct all participants on one level regardless of their readiness level. The evaluation/survey also serves as a catalyst that benefits all with respect to the programs origins, path and direction.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Criteria for Success

When comparing the format of the one-size fits all programs vs. Chance to Advance pick-and-choose format, participants currently enrolled in Chance to Advance favored 100% the pick and choose format over the one size fits all format. When asked why, 70% found the pick-and-choose format to be more flexible, class size more desirable and instruction more reflective of their individual needs. The other 30% suggested that, although Chance to Advance smaller class size allowed them to be more attentive to instruction, both groups were excellent when comparing class instruction. But that same 30% favored the one size fits all programs over Chance to Advance when incentives such as child care and funding for transportation to and from class were made available. When comparing the success rate of the knowledge obtained and sustained of Chance to Advance participants vs. the one-size fits all, on a much larger scale, 75% of all clients (one-size-fits-all) interviewed were challenged when asked about basic resume outlines, due to all their resumes being mass produced with participants having no hands on experience with its application. In comparison to the 50% enrolled in Chance to Advance resume writing were not only instructed on basic resume outlines but were also given information pertaining to the different types of resumes, how create them and which outline best fit their current need in relationship to the job market of today. They are also asked to prepare and produce their own resume outlines, reinforcing their independence while enhancing their ability to tutor and share information with others.

IV. ACTION

Data Collecting Methods

In maintaining a well rounded program as well as a well rounded individual, testing was provided to all willing participants of Chance to Advance with no refusals. This process was instituted in order to assess the current academic skill levels of all participants in relationship to reading/comprehension, math, and spelling capabilities. Once individual levels were established, and more intervention applied if needed, i.e. G.E.D. instruction, or Basic Tutoring, all participants were referred to the necessary entities accordingly.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Data Collected

Data collected through the use of testing, questionnaire/ survey and interviews showed that all participants enrolled in Chance to Advance were unaware of their problems associated with comprehension, reading and math or of how important it is to sustain an accurate knowledge of skill levels when it comes to finding and competing for the jobs or careers of their choice.

V. RESULTS

Midway through Chance to Advance, participants were asked to submit (at their leisure) suggestions in the suggestion box or any opinions, ideas or comments that could be used to better equip the program in continuing to provide an atmosphere that meets the needs of all its participants. Out of the 10 currently enrolled, 7 individuals submitted responses as follows; "Chance to Advance has hit the mark by providing adequate instruction and information that is essential to a successful Job hunt." Three out of ten suggested, "implementing more time for class instruction," meaning, instead of the two hours that it currently provides per session, institute 3 to 4 more hours for those individuals willing to commit. At the conclusion of the 12 week program, follow-ups will be conducted to assess the success rate of participants and to remain in contact with those still in need of further instruction and guidance. Note that presently 2 out of 10 participants currently enrolled are employed and working on part-time basis, doing what they are skilled at and love to do.

VI. REFLECTION

My Action Research Project clearly reflects all that I anticipated positively speaking. For instance: Chance to Advance out performed the one-size-fits-all programs with results reflective of a program that brings about stimulation, motivation, awareness and the guidance required in order to obtain a job/career that best fits personal skill and academic levels. The data collected shows that the current one size fits all programs lack the fundamentals associated with long term successful outlooks. Statistics produced on a small scale (participants of Chance to Advance) suggested that 7 out of 10 participants had negative experiences with the one-size-fits all format, were they were not viewed as an individual but as part of a group that did not represent the individual reasons for being enrolled. Although data collected were favorable to the pick-and-choose format.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

unfortunately I have concluded that with the time frame previously outlined, is insufficient and more time must be allotted in order to achieve the most accurate results possible. This has been suggested because Chance to Advance the pick-and choose format, is a really new program that has only been successful with an enrollment of 10 participants.

Leaving room for some to speculation on its success rate, if participation was so low when compared to that of the one-size-fits-all programs whose enrollment has far outweighed that of Chance to Advance, on a scale of 1 to 10 the one-size-fits-all format rates a ten with Chance to Advance coming in on number one.

CONCLUSION

If I were to do things differently, first I would try to accumulate as many participants as possible. Second, I would plan testing to be done at the earliest possible convenience, so that there would be no need to solely count on personal observations, thereby providing an opportunity for referrals to be made as soon as possible. Third, I would prefer to work with another individual because, (a) Counseling support and intervention would be in place at all times; (b) participants appear to be more attentive, focused and instruction more engaging when there were two individuals to concentrate on; and (c) with the availability of two individuals conducting class instruction, one person could be freed up to tend to other matters, allowing class instruction to flow on a more consistent level and in the end resulting in a more beneficial program format for all involved. Last but not least, I would try to institute funding for childcare services and travel expenses that would accumulate for the purposes of obtaining applications, going to and from interviews and class instruction in Chance to Advance.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Does Santa have you feeling like you
barely have enough money for the holidays?

Is your Christmas list bigger than your paycheck?

DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

Plan on making more money next year!

Join the Lycoming County Literacy Projects' *"Chance To Advance"* program. This program will enable you to build job search skills, as well as help you find a better job that suits your needs.

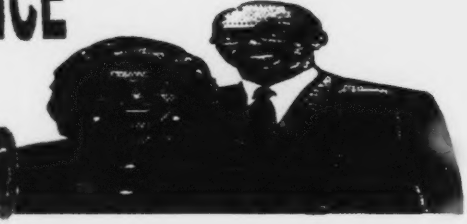
The best thing about the program is that is is FREE of cost. If you would like more information, Call 321-0200.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LYCOMING COUNTY LITERACY PROJECT

"PRESENTS"

CHANCE



TO

ADVANCE

DIRECTED BY: **MRS. LINDA HERR**
INSTRUCTED BY: *MS. VALORIE TAYLOR*

LYCOMING COUNTY LITERACY PROJECT

CHANCE ADVANCE

MISSION STATEMENT:

CHANCE TO ADVANCE - PROMISES TO BRING ABOUT AN ATOMSPHERE THAT WILL SUPPLY ALL WILLING PARTICIPANTS WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO EVALUATE PERSONAL AND CURRENT SKILL LEVELS WITH THAT OF THE JOB MAKET AND CAREER FIELDS OF TODAY.

BY EMPOWERING PARTICIPANTS WITH SUPPORTIVE TECHNIQUES IN A CUSTOMIZED TRAINING PROGRAM THAT WILL PROVIDE STRUCTURE, GUIDANCE AND A FOCUS TOWARDS SUCCESS.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LYCOMING COUNTY LITERACY PROJECT

CHANCE TO ADVANCE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. GET AQUAINTED/IDENTIFYING YOUR SKILLS
2. POSITIVE ATTITUDES
3. SELF ESTEEM
4. GOAL SETTING
5. JOB NEEDS
6. JOB APPLICATIONS
7. JOB SEARCH & NETWORKING
8. JOB OBJECTIVES
9. RESUME WRITING
10. PHONE SKILLS & EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS
11. PRESENTATION: LIBRARY RESOURCES
12. INTRODUCTION TO COMPUTERS
13. COVER LETTERS
14. THANK - YOU NOTES
15. DRESS TO IMPRESS
16. INTRODUCTION: JOB INTERVIEWS
17. MOCK INTERVIEWS (1)
18. MOCK INTERVIEWS (2)
19. CAREERS & GUIDANCE
20. OPEN DAYS (PARTICIPANTS)

CHANCE TO ADVANCE

ADMISSIONS SHEET

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS THAT APPLY TO YOU. LEAVE BLANK ANY QUESTIONS THAT YOU PERFER NOT TO ANSWER. THESE RESPONSES WILL ALSO BE USED FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES. YOUR AUTHORIZATION WILL BE NEEDED IN ORDER FOR YOUR APPLICATION TO BE PROCESSED.

1. NAME____

2. ADDRESS______________________________________

CITY ____________________ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _______

3. TELEPHONE NUMBER___________________________

4. AGE______

5. SEX - MALE ____ FEMALE _____

6. FAMILY SIZE __________

7. EMPLOYMENT STATUS - EMPLOYED _____ UNEMPLOYED _____

8. LAST DATE OF EMPLOYMENT? _______________________

9. NAME OF THE COMPANY WITH WHOM YOU WERE LAST EMPLOYED?

____

10. NAME OF COMPANY IN WHICH YOU ARE PRESENTLY EMPLOYED?

____

11. ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME RANGE: (check one)

1000 - 5000 _____ 5000 - 10,000 _____10,000 - 15,000 _____

15,000 - 20,000 _____20,000 - 25,000 & UP _____

12. ARE YOU PRESENTLY:

SINGLE ___ MARRIED____ SEPARATED ___ DIVORCED ____

CHANCE TO ADVANCE - CONT'

13. HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVING IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD ARE (18) YEARS OLD OR OLDER?__________

14. HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVING IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD ARE PRESENTLY 17 YEARS OLD OR YOUNGER ?________

15. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ENROLLED IN AN EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM? YES____ NO______

IF YES, WHO WAS THE SPONSORING AGENCY?

____

16. WERE YOU ABLE TO FIND A JOB WHILE YOU WERE ENROLLED WITH THIS PROGRAM ? YES _____ NO ______

17. DID YOU FIND THE PROGRAM VALUABLE, INFORMATIVE AND SUPPORTIVE OF YOUR NEEDS ? YES_____ NO ______

18. HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINIG PROGRAM/S?

EXCELLENT _______ GOOD ______ FAIR _____ POOR _______

19. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE INSTRUCTOR/S?

EXCELLENT ______ GOOD ______ FAIR _____ POOR _____

20. IF YOU COULD MAKE ANY CHANGES WITHIN THE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS, WHAT WOULD THEY BE?

____

____

____

21. WHICH WOULD YOU PREFER:

A. AN EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM THAT OFFERS A ONE SIZE FITS ALL PROGRAM WITH A TIME DURATION OF (5) TO (6) HOURS PER SESSION?

OR

B. AN EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM THAT ALLOWED YOU TO MAKE CHOICES ON SUBJECT MATTER ACCORDING TO YOUR NEEDS ?

CHECK ONE - A.________ B________

22. IF YOU CHECKED QUESTION (A) WHY?

____

____

____

23. IF YOU CHECKED QUESTION (B) WHY?

____

____

____

24. HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT "*CHANCE TO ADVANCE*"?

____

____

____

25. WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE FROM THIS PROGRAM?

____

____

____

26. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE INSTRUCTOR?

EXCELLENT _____ GOOD _____ FAIR _____ POOR _____

27. HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE PROGRAMS OVER-ALL PERFORMANCE?

EXCELLENT ___ GOOD ___ FAIR ___ POOR ___

28. DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS ON HOW THE PROGRAM COULD BE IMPROVED?

____

____

____

29. WAS THE PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL IN HELPING YOU TO REACH YOUR GOAL?

YES _______ NO _______

30. WHAT DID YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT WHAT THE PROGRAM HAS TO OFFER?

____

____

____

CHANCE TO ADVANCE - CONT'

31. HOW MANY CLASSES DO YOU PLAN ON PARTICIPATING IN?
__________ ?

32. WHAT WERE THE TITLES OF THE CLASSES?

______________________________ ______________________________

______________________________ ______________________________

33. WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THIS PROGRAM TO FAMILY, FRIENDS AND CO-WORKERS?

YES ______ **NO** _____

34. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE ATOMSPHERE OF THE PROGRAM (*CHANCE TO ADVANCE*) LOCATIONS?

____

____

35. WHAT CLASS SIZE WOULD YOU PREFER? (CHECK ONE)

SMALL ______ **MED**______ **LARGE** _____

36. WERE YOU ABLE TO FIND A JOB WITH THE SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE OF *CHANCE TO ADVANCE*?

YES ________ **OR NO**_________

COMMENTS:

____

____

NAME (PLEASE PRINT): ______________________________

SIGNATURE: ______________________________

DATE: ____________________

NAME OF PROGRAM INSTRUCTOR: ______________________________

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION
able
PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
Special Project
A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Redesigning The Current Student Tracking Form

Action Researcher's Name:

Donna Urey

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

My project, Redesigning the Current Student Tracking Form, was based on ineffective student tracking information for our program use and Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education required submission. Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV Adult Education Programs include an ABE program, a GED program, a Prison GED program and two JTPA programs.

I used the Student Intake/Data form supplied by PDE from Program Year 1996-97 as a point of comparison and used evaluations of this form from teachers and counselors as a starting point.

I reviewed formats from other agencies and determined how they collect student data. In compiling this information, I used the data, suggestions and comments that I thought would best meet our requirements.

I'm pleased with the end result because it has significantly improved accuracy in data input and has enabled me to enter student information in a much more timely manner.

II. PROBLEM

We submit student data to Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education for Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV's Adult Education Programs - including an ABE program, a GED program, a GED Prison program and two JTPA programs. Due to PDE's requirements for student data submission, an improved student data intake is necessary to collect student information in the most effective and timely manner. Also, there are many changes in data submission due to LitPro. It is important to me to collect the student data with the most efficient method for data entry on LitPro. The information from the intake should follow the format of the software program.

The need for an improved student data form can been seen in the layout of the old tracking form. It is hard to complete, missing pertinent information due to LitPro and PDE requirements and needs more complete information.

III. PLANNING

I began the process by announcing the need to redesign the current tracking form at a

November, 1997, staff meeting. I asked for input and suggestions from teachers and counselors as to what should be included, deleted or changed on the current form. I also received information from other agencies about the format they use to collect student data. I thought there might be a problem with staff in changing forms in the middle of a contact year, but they all agreed there was a need for an updated form. When submission of the new form began, there were some problems with completing all of the information requested because periodic attendance reports were due to PDE and all the assessment information was not available. Hopefully, in the new contract year, this problem will be solved.

I checked with the Lawrence County GED test administration program to determine the required scores for the GED practice test and the actual GED test that should be reported on the intake and exit forms for accurate LitPro reporting. This was a major stumbling block that Iím happy to say has been clarified.

IV. ACTION

I was able to discuss and evaluate the ongoing changes in the tracking form with our program administrator, teachers and counselors. Each draft of the form was implemented with changes and corrections suggested by teachers and counselors. There were also required changes made due to LitPro updates. I received an announcement via e-mail on May 24, 1999, that another update of LitPro software is scheduled for release on June 1, 1999.

V. RESULTS

The result is that we have a much more efficient student tracking system. This is evident in our ability to meet PDE reporting requirements regarding enrollment, attendance and assessments. It is also important to our in-house program to track attendance by sites, enrollment requirements and assessment gains. We can pass along accurate information teachers and counselors by site and program. (See Appendix)

VI. REFLECTION

The longer our new forms are in use, the more familiar we will all become, making the forms and the LitPro software program a reliable tracking system for our program needs and PDE requirements. This has been a rewarding experience for me in that I feel I have made a genuine contribution to the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV's adult education program in making student tracking more efficient and data submission to PDE accurate and complete.

APPENDIX

A. Original Form

B. Redesigned Form

Data Base Record No. /_/_/_/_/_/ **Program No.** /__/__/__/__/__/__/__/ **(CONTRACT)**

PROGRAM YEAR 1997-98 **Month of Enrollment (number)** ___/___/ **(MOYR)**

Name and designated code of the class or tutoring site

Site ______________________________ Class Code C/T /__/__/ (CLASSCOD)

A

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Student Intake/Data Form

(Use only for direct computer entry, DO NOT SUBMIT)

This form is intended for internal use by programs submitting their student data on floppy disk. Make any modifications that are required and photocopy for distribution to the teachers and tutors. These forms are not to be used to submit data directly to the Bureau.

The common practice has been to complete the first part of the form when the student enrolls. The second section is then completed when the student leaves the program. Because we require completion information at the end of the program year even when the student continues past June, agencies may wish to attach multiple copies of the second page for subsequent years. Carbon copies are no longer necessary because you will not be submitting these forms to ABLE.

1. Name ____ (SURNAME)
   (Last) (First)
2. Social Security Number /_/_/_/_/_/_/_/_/_/_/_/ (SS)
3. Home Address: Number & Street ________________________________
   City________________________ Zip Code ____________(ZIP)
4. Telephone ________________________ _____ OK to call _____ OK to mail
5. County /_/_/ (2 digit code) **(COUNTY)**
6. School District /_/_/_/_/_/ (See instructions for code) **(SCHLDIST)**
7. Sex: 1. ___Male 2. ___Female (SEX) 9. Race: ____ (see instructions for numeric code) **(RACE)**
8. Student's initial entry level in this program. **(LEVEL)** Check one level only (see instructions):

1. ___Preliterate ESL 0-1	4. ___Advanced ESL 9-10	7. ___Intermediate ABE 6-8
2. ___Beginning ESL 2-4	5. ___Preliterate ABE 0-1	8. ___ABE 9-12
3. ___Intermediate ESL 6-8	6. ___Beginning ABE 0-4	9. ___ GED Prep

9. Date of birth ____/____/____ Month / Day/Year. **(BIRTHYR)**

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A

10. Student household status (enter one). (MARITAL)

___ 1. Head of a Single Parent Household
___ 2. Head or Spouse (Partner) of 2 Parent Household
___ 3. Head or Spouse (Partner) - No Dependents
___ 4. Dependent Member of Household
___ 5. Living Alone
___ 6. Living in Group Quarters

11. Number of Dependents Under 18 /_/_/ (DEPENDTS)

15 a. At time of enrollment student is (check one--see instructions) (EMPLOYMT)

1. ___employed 2. ___unemployed/available for work 3. ___ not employed/not available for work

b. At time of enrollment does the student receive public assistance? ___Yes ___No (ASSIST)

c. At time of enrollment student is (check ALL that apply--see instructions)

___handicapped (HANDICAP)
___institutionalized (INSTITUT)
___homeless adult (HOMELESS)
___an immigrant (IMMIGRNT)

___limited in English proficiency (NELP)
___displaced homemaker (DISPHOME)
___enrolled in other Federal training or educational program (PIC, etc.) (OTHERFED)

16. Circle last grade of school completed: (LSTGRADE)

00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12

Special Education 13
Non-English Diploma 14
Post-High School Study 15

17. How did student find out about this program? (check only ONE): (FINDOUT)

___01. School Board, IU, School announcement
___02. Newspaper, radio, TV
___03. Handout, mailed leaflet
___04. Sign, billboard, phone book (not in school, worksite, agency)
___05. Relative, friend, acquaintance
___06. Employer/union-worksite announcement
___07. Previously studied ABE/GED or Adult Literacy
___08. School/college counselor/teacher
___09. Institution (group home) personnel
___10. Library/other independent
___11. Community agency/human service agency
___12. Clergy/church group
___13. PIC/JTPA SPOC program
___14. Rehab. Counselor, caseworker, OES job service
___15. Court: Probation, parole, etc.
___16. Military recruiter
___17. Political/public official
___18. Other (none of the above

18. Major reason for participating in program (check only ONE): (MAJREASN)

1.___ to improve job prospects
2.___ to learn better English
3.___ to obtain driver's license
4.___ to obtain citizenship
5.___ to get diploma or certificate
6.___ to qualify for training military
7.___ to read to or help children with homework
8.___ social acceptance, self satisfaction
9.___ qualify for college, business school
10.___ required by probation, welfare, parole
11.___ to achieve competency in reading/spelling, etc., with no specific purpose in mind
12.___ to achieve competency in math
13.___ other (none of the above)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A

Section Two: Completions and Impact Data
(to be filled out at end of student's program or at the end of the Program Year)

19. How many hours of instruction did this student receive during this program? _/_/_/ (INSTRHRS) (Round Fractions)

20 Other contact hours (counseling, assessment, etc.) _/_/ (CONTACT) (Round Fractions)

COMPLETION AND EARLY SEPARATION DATA

21. For the entry level (ESL, 0-4, 5-8, or 9-12) indicated in Item 7, Copy One, check one of the following: (TERMSTAT)

1. __ Completed and moved to higher level (Student completed level in which enrolled and re-enrolled in a higher level).
2. __ Completed (Student completed level of instruction in which enrolled; no subsequent enrollment in higher level).
3. __ Continued (Student attended instruction throughout the program; still progressing at same level).
4. __ Early Separation (Student did not complete level of instruction in which enrolled and separated before end of program).

22. EARLY SEPARATIONS: If "Early Separation" is checked above, please indicate the primary reason for the student's early separation from this level. (Consult instructions section and enter one 2-digit number. NOTE: If a student PASSES a level, that student is NOT an early separation, even if he/she leaves before the program ends.)

_____ (SEPREASN) Additional comments: ____

23. Circle the number of Grade Levels or ESL levels the student advanced.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (GRDADVNC)

24. If the student has been tested, please complete the following: (See Instructions)

Name of pre-test or pre-assessment ________________________

a. Code _/_/ (See instruction for Code)(PRETEST)

b. Pretest month _______ (PREMONTH)

c. Subjects: R Reading; M Mathematics; C Combined. (PRESUBJ)

d. Test score type: __ 1. Grade Level. 2. GED test. 3. MELT. (PRETYPE)

e. Test score equivalent _/_/_/ (to nearest tenth) (PRESCORE)

Name of post-test ________________________

a. Code /_/_/ (See instruction for Code) (POSTCODE)

b. Post-test month _______ (POSTMNTH)

c. Subjects: R Reading; M Mathematics; C Combined. (POSTSUBJ)

d. Test score type: __ 1. Grade Level. 2. GED test. 3. MELT. (POSTTYPE)

e. Test score equivalent _/_/_/ (to nearest tenth) (POSTSCOR)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A

25. IMPACT DATA: ACHIEVEMENT OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

You must check at least one, but check as many as appropriate.

Educational

___ Improved basic skills for personal satisfaction and increased self-confidence. (IMPRVBSK)
___ Completed ABE Level I (0-5), ABE Level II (6-8), or GED Prep. (9-12) (LEVL1IMP)
___ Completed Beginning ESL. (ESL1COMP)
___ Completed Intermediate ESL. (ESL2COMP)
___ Completed Advanced ESL. (ESL3COMP)
___ Improved, reading, writing, and math skills. (LEVL1IMP)
___ Obtained an adult high school diploma. (HSDIPLOM)
___ Passed the GED test. (GEDP)
___ GED test taken; results not received. (GEDT)
___ Learned the English language (for participants whose primary language is not English) (ENGLLANG)
___ Entered another education/training program. (OTHREDTR)

Societal

___ Received U.S. Citizenship. (USCITZN)
___ Registered to vote or voted for the first time. (VOTED)
___ Received driver's license as a result of program. (DRIVER)
___ Referred to agencies (other than educational) for needed services. (AGENCYRF)

Economic

___ Obtained a job. (JOB)
___ Obtained a better job or salary, or secured job retention. (BTRJOB)
___ Was removed from public assistance. (OFFPUBAS)
___ Met personal objective. (METPOBJ)

Other Outcomes

___ ____________________
___ ____________________
___ ____________________
___ ____________________
___ ____________________

I certify that this Information is correct.Completed by ______________________________
(initials)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Adult Basic and Literacy Education
Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV
STUDENT INTAKE/DATA FORM

B

Basic Information:

Name: ________________________ **Social Security #:** ___/__/____ **Birthdate:** _/_/_

Address: ________________________ **City/State/Zip:** ______________________________

Telephone #: ___-___-____ **OK to Call:** Yes ☐ No ☐ **OK to Mail:** Yes ☐ No ☐

County Code: __ (2 digit code) School District Code: _____ (5 digit code)

Enrollment date: __/__/__ Site: ________________ Site No. __-__

Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐ Race: ____ (see instructions for numeric code)

Program Information:

Student Initial Entry Level: (check one)

Preliterate ESL 0-1		Advanced ESL 9-10		Intermediate ABE 5-8	
Beginning ESL 2-4		Preliterate ABE 0-1		ABE 9-12	
Intermediate ESL 6-8		Beginning ABE 2-4		GED Prep	

Student Household Status: (check one)

Head of a Single Parent Household		Head or Spouse (Partner) of 2 Parent Household	
Head or Spouse (Partner) – No Dependents		Dependent Member of Household	
Living Alone		Living in Group Quarters	

Number of Dependents under 18 Year of Age: __

At time of enrollment the students is: (check one)

Employed	
Unemployed/available for work	
Unemployed/unavailable for work	

Education:

Last grade of school completed: __ Special Education ☐ Post-High School Study ☐

Previous GED test results: ______________________ Date: ________________

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

B

Other Information:

How did student find out about this program? (check one)

School Board, IU, School Announcement		Library/Other Independent	
Newspaper/Radio/TV		Community Agency/Human Services Agency	
Handout/Mailed Leaflet		Clergy/Church Group	
Sign/Billboard/Phone Book		PIC/JTPA SPOC Program	
Relative/Friend/Acquaintance		Rehab Counselor/Caseworker/OES Job Service	
Employer/Union-Worksite Announcement		Court: Probation, Parole, etc.	
Previously studied ABE/GED or Adult Literacy		Military Recruiter	
School/College counselor/teacher		Political/Public Official	
Institution (group home) Personnel		Other (explain)	

Major reason for participating in our program: (check one)

To improve job prospects		Social acceptance/self-satisfaction	
To learn better English		Qualify for college/business school	
To obtain driver's license		Required by probation/welfare/parole	
To obtain citizenship		To achieve competency in reading/spelling	
To earn diploma or certificate		To achieve competency in math	
To quality for military training		To reading or help children with homework	
Other (explain)			

At time of enrollment is the student:

Receiving Public Assistance Yes ☐ No ☐
Handicapped Yes ☐ No ☐
Institutionalized Yes ☐ No ☐
A Homeless Adult Yes ☐ No ☐
An Immigrant Yes ☐ No ☐
ESL Yes ☐ No ☐
A Displaced Homemaker Yes ☐ No ☐
Enrolled in Federal Training or educational program Yes ☐ No ☐

Pre-Test Information:

TABE LOCATOR: Date: ____/____/______

Subtest	# Correct
Reading	
Math	
Language	

TEST INSTRUMENT ADMINISTERED:TABE

Complete Battery: ☐ Survey: ☐
Form: ________ Level: ________
Date: ____/____/____

Subtests	Raw (NC)	Scaled Score	Grade Equiv.
Reading			
Math Comp			
Applied Math			
Language			
Spelling			

OFFICIAL GED PRACTICE TEST:

Date: ____/____/____

Subtest	Raw (NC)	GED Std. Score
Writing		
Social Studies		
Science		
Literature & Arts		
Math		
COMPOSITE		

Revised 5/24/99

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

B

Section Two: Completion and Impact Data
(To be completed at the end of student's program or at the end of the program year)

Completion and Early Separation Data

Name: ______________________ Site: ______________________

How many hours of instruction did this student receive during this program? _ _ _ hours

Other contact hours (counseling, assessment, etc)? _ _ _ Achieved Personal Goal? Yes ☐ No ☐

Exit Status (check one)

Completed level and left	☐	Completed goal and left	☐
Continued to higher level	☐	Continued to next level	☐
Continued, same level or goal	☐	Separated early	☐

Early Separation Reason (check one)

To take a job (unemployed at time of enrollment)	☐	To take a better job (employed at time of enrollment)	☐
Released from institution or transferred to another institution	☐	To enter a training program	☐
Moved from the area	☐	Health problems	☐
Transportation problems	☐	Child care problems	☐
Family problems	☐	Time class is scheduled	☐
Location of class	☐	Lack of interest; instruction not helpful to participant	☐
Financial problem	☐	Information unavailable	☐
Other (explain)	☐		☐

Testing Information

Grade Levels Advanced? _ _

If the student has been post-tested, please complete the following?

TEST INSTRUMENT ADMINISTERED: TABE

Complete Battery: ☐ Survey: ☐

Form: ________ Level: ________

Date given: _____ / _____ / _____

Subtests	Raw (NC)	Scaled Score	Grade Equiv.
Reading			
Math Comp			
Applied Math			
Language			
Spelling			

Official GED Practice Test: ☐

Actual GED Test: ☐

Date: ___ / ___ / ___

Subtests	Raw (NC)	Scaled Score	Percentile Rank (if applicable)
Writing			
Social Studies			
Science			
Literature & Arts			
Math			
COMPOSITE			

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

B

Impact Data: Achievement of Program Participants

Please check at least one in each section, but check as many as appropriate.

Educational:

☐	Passed the GED test
☐	GED test taken; results not received
☐	Obtained high school diploma
☐	Entered another educational/training program
☐	Entered the military
☐	Other (Explain)

Societal:

☐	Received U.S. citizenship
☐	Registered to vote
☐	Voted for the first time
☐	Received driver's license as a result of the program
☐	Other (Explain)

Economic:

☐	Gained employment
☐	Secured advancement with employment
☐	Was removed from public assistance
☐	Other (Explain)

Personal:

☐	Read more to children
☐	Greater involvement in schooling of children
☐	Other (Explain)

I certify that this information is correct.

Completed by: ______________________________

Revised 5/24/99

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BUREAU OF
ADULT BASIC &
LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Conversation Partners: Work in Progress

Action Researcher's Name:

Lora Zangari

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

This study was conducted with Lancaster-Lebanon IU1's ESL program for foreign students, the International English Training for Adults Program, in Millersville, PA. The purpose of the study was to improve upon the design of the Conversation Partners course by adding a structure that would foster learner autonomy and improve speaking and listening skills. The structure added was designed to develop language learning strategy awareness, increase the use of strategies, and encourage learners to seek new and different ways to enhance their own language learning experiences.

After approximately 15 hours of participation in the course with the new structure in place, it was expected that students would be able to identify goals, plan and use strategies to meet their goals, evaluate their progress and improve their listening scores on the SLEP test. Additionally, it was hoped that the process would impact students' perceptions and behaviors. Data collected suggests that each participant met with some level of success; however, further research is warranted given the brevity of the study.

II. PROBLEM

Many learners are challenged by the enormity of the task of learning English. While they want to be able to communicate, they might be bogged down with details, particularly with correctness, and therefore lack the confidence to take advantage of the abundance of opportunities that immersion provides. Also, prior language learning experiences, cultural background, and other individual factors can influence one's approach to learning and using a second language. Some learners seem to have a natural talent for learning languages, while for others, it is a monumental undertaking. With the right structure, the latter learners can develop strategies to systematically overcome some of the boundaries, while all learners are able to better utilize time, energy, and experiences to improve language skills.

The International English Training for Adults Program is an intensive ESL program for foreign students. Generally students in the program are enrolled for 18 hours per week (one 9-hour course, one 6-hour course, and one 3-hour course) Conversation Partners, a three-hour course, was implemented to give students an opportunity to practice using English with Americans in a structured, low-risk environment. Students meet for one or two hours a week with volunteer conversation partners. Suggested topics for discussion are provided for each week. The students must be prepared to discuss either the suggested topic or one of their choosing before they meet with their partners. The conversations are recorded, and the students write in journals about the conversations they had and about what they learned from listening to their tapes.

The Conversation Partners course stresses the development of listening and speaking skills. Many ESL learners lack a structure which can help them determine which areas of language learning to focus on and what to do to help themselves improve in those areas. Learners need to be able to identify goals, apply effective strategies to meet their goals, and assess their progress. The present course design allows for but does not require participants to plan their learning accordingly, through the use of a specific structure. As an instructor concerned about contextualized, learner-centered and self-directed language learning, Conversation Partners seems a perfect place to introduce a structure that will help learners communicate better and feel that their individual needs and goals are being addressed and met.

Conversation Partners is offered every semester. It is an opportunity for both the learner and instructor to individualize language learning. It is a course open for continuous improvement. Because of the adaptability of its structure, it is possible that other programs could adopt Conversation Partners, or some variation thereof, as part of their course offerings. Since its inception at International English Training, it continues to be a course in demand.

III. PLANNING

Participants in Conversation Partners, prior to the intervention, were expected to keep a general journal in which they wrote about what they talked about, what they learned, and/or language problems they might have encountered during each meeting with their partners. They also tape recorded each meeting and wrote weekly in their journals about what they learned from listening to their tapes.

For this project, participants were asked to listen to their tapes in order to identify a specific language learning goal. After choosing a focus, each learner was to plan some action to be taken during the next conversation partner meeting which would them help to meet the identified goal. After the next meeting during which they applied the strategies, the participants were to evaluate their language learning behavior and progress in their journals. The instructor made suggestions for strategy use and provided feedback on a regular basis.

Before beginning the project, students filled out a Background Questionnaire (Appendix A) and a Self-Assessment (Appendix B) which provided such data as a student's native language and other languages spoken, language learning goals, length of English language study before enrollment, and self-perceived proficiency levels. A self-assessment was administered at the end of the project so that data could be compared. Additionally, all students took the Secondary Level English Proficiency Test (SLEP) upon entering the program and at the end of the semester.

Students were given explicit instructions about keeping a record of their appointments, goals, activities, and evaluation. It was explained that their journals would serve as a record for the project. They agreed in writing that data could be collected and used for the purposes of this study.

Basically, learning strategies are what a learner does in order to acquire, store, retrieve, and use information. All learners employ them, but to what extent and how well they are chosen, varies from one individual to another. Oxford defines learning strategies as "specific actions taken by the learner make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1989, p. 8).

This project was undertaken with two assumptions in mind: 1) learners benefit from taking responsibility for their own language learning (setting goals, applying strategies, self-evaluating); 2) contextualized language learning (Conversation Partners) provides the opportunity for students to use English in real situations and automatically improves speaking and listening skills.

Do learners agree with these assumptions? In order to measure the success of the intervention undertaken by this project, it is necessary to take into account not only gains on standardized tests, but also changes in learners' behaviors and perceptions about their progress. Many factors can influence the outcomes of any assessment; for example, the beginning proficiency level, the length of stay in an immersion setting, the goals of the learners, etc. can effect how much and what kind of progress is made by each participant. It is difficult to compare one learner's progress to another's.

The issue of what constitutes good learning behavior has been approached from a few different angles. Researchers have had to rely heavily on limited observations and self-reporting by learners to determine which strategies were used at any given time for any number of reasons. This latter approach is justified in that there are many factors which cannot be changed or controlled by the teacher or the learner; however, if learners are aware of what they do and why, they can take steps to improve on their own learning habits (Bialystok, 1981, p. 24).

One constraint of this project would be the learners' understanding of and ability to fulfill the requirements and articulate details of the process. Additionally, it might prove difficult to encourage reluctant students to remain on task throughout the project. It was hoped that monitoring and feedback from instructor would address such constraints.

For this project, success was to be measured by students showing any increase or change in strategy use, as indicated in their journals, as well as by an increase in proficiency levels, as perceived by the learner and indicated on the Self-assessment.

Additionally, SLEP scores from previous participants in Conversation Partners were used as a baseline measure of comparison. In the semester prior to this study (fall, 1998), students who participated for the whole semester gained, on average, a total of 11 points (raw score) on the listening portion of the test. Because the intervention of this project was implemented more than halfway through the semester (spring, 1999), participants in the study were expected to gain only 5 points on average.

Will the implementation of a specific structure in which ESL learners, during two-months participation in the Conversation Partners course identify language learning goals, plan and use strategies to meet their goals, and evaluate their own behaviors improve gains on a the listening portion of the SLEP Test and effect changes in the learners' perceptions of their skills and behaviors?

IV. ACTION

The intervention was implemented March 1, 1999 and ended before the semester on April 30, 1999. In all, each of the four participants had 10-12 one-hour appointments during which the intervention was in place.

First participants were informed about the project. I detailed the intervention so that the participants understood the purpose of the study and what changes were involved with the Conversation Partners course. Then I briefed the students on what language learning strategies are and gave them examples of what their journal entries would look like after going through one cycle of the process. I based the examples on goals I picked up from their previous journal writings

(Appendix C).

Once I was convinced that the students understood their role and were comfortable with participating, I obtained their written consent. I also informed the volunteers and obtained verbal consent from each of them.

The students began the process with their next conversation partner appointments. We ran into problems almost immediately. One constraint of the course is the limitation involved with volunteer schedules. There were times when appointments had to be canceled or rearranged. This sometimes interfered with the consistency and flow of the students' goal setting and strategy implementation. There were some other logistical problems such as students forgetting their tapes (and my learning about it after the fact) or equipment malfunctioning (or not being operated properly).

Another anticipated problem was that the participants struggled with the process itself. I held both group and individual meetings to try to address their concerns and answer questions. Some became accustomed more quickly than others; still, another issue was follow-through. One student simply lacked the interest, enthusiasm, and/or discipline (he never did explain his reason, so I can only guess) to do the assignments completely. All of the participants were lax in self-evaluating. By the end of the project, however, they all seemed to have mastered the process.

I collected their journals weekly and gave the students written and verbal feedback and suggestions. At the end of the semester, the participants completed another self-assessment as well as a final project (Appendix D). Finally, the students took the SLEP test.

V. RESULTS

According to the baseline set at the beginning of the project, all participants met or exceeded expectations on the SLEP test. As stated above, participants were expected to have a minimal raw score gain of 5 points. It should be noted, however, that other factors contributed to these gains. In addition to participation in Conversation Partners, students had 15 hours of class instruction as well as the benefits of individual study, practice and incidental exposure to the language. Interestingly, the student with the lowest beginning score ended with the highest gain. The students with the the shortest and longest amounts of time had the least gains.

The students were asked to rate their abilities language abilities and expectations for the semester, on a scale from 1 to 10 (see Appendix B), 1 being the lowest rating. In this case, all participants failed to meet their own expectations with the following exceptions: Narumi felt that she met listening and speaking expectations, but indicated a negative overall gain; Henrique believed he reached his goal in overall ability, but indicated negative gains for speaking and listening. These inconsistencies might be attributed to varying interpretations of the questions or it could be that students, when assessing specific skills, measure performance in different ways, among other possibilities. I had hoped to do follow-up interviews to discuss the discrepancies, but time did not permit it.

Although the results of the self-assessment were a bit discouraging, the results of the final project shed new light on the matter. As with the self-assessment, for the final project, participants were asked to rate their English ability. However, this time participants were focused more on the Conversation Partners course. Perhaps this explains the difference in gains. As indicated by their answers on the final project, all students felt that both their speaking and listening skills had improved.

Based on the data, it would seem that the intervention was successful. However, there was a great deal of soft data that might be even more telling than that which is indicated by tables above. Because one of the aims of this project was to effect the learners' perceptions, strategy awareness and behaviors, it was decided that behavioral and attitudinal changes mentioned in journals, on the learner self-assessment and final project and would be considered positive outcomes. Because they deal directly with the effects of the Conversation Partners course, some of the changes that were stated on the final project are quoted below:

Ai - don't translate as much; answer more quickly; don't misunderstand as much

Ivoneide - more secure; faster; don't worry about correctness; lost fear of talking; can understand from context if not every word; guess meaning sometimes

Narumi - speaking without thinking, pay attention to pronunciation, understand teachers

Henrique - use vocabulary from studying, improved by a variety of listening activities

It was hoped that learners would be able to articulate their goals and progress throughout the project in their journals. As it turned out, much of the time, goals and strategies were blended together and little evaluation was recorded. Participants had the option of identifying one goal and continuing to strategize to meet the goal or changing goals and strategies periodically. There was no set pattern for any one participant. What did become clear was that students were making discoveries about behaviors they found to be helpful for improving certain skills or communication, seemingly despite the imposed structure, hence the blending of goals and strategies. Also, their goals and strategies became more detailed and focused as the project progressed.

For example, one student wrote for the first journal entry that she wanted to "understand everything," so she would practice more. That same student after several meetings and journal entries decided that she would speak "faster and fluently" by "thinking in English" and "talking to herself".

I believe, from the data collected and from the ongoing interactive feedback throughout the project, that this project was a success. The participants gained confidence, improved their language abilities, and learned about learning. While they might not have enjoyed some of the work involved, They felt that the process was worthwhile and they enjoyed the experience of Conversation Partners. Having examined the structure more closely, and taking into account the participants feedback, I anticipate making additional changes in the future. This is partly due also to the learner-centered philosophy that is a natural part of the International English Training Program.

VI. REFLECTION

While each learner met with his/her own success, the project itself had some shortcomings. Firstly, because it takes students such a long time to get used to the process, it would have been better if there was more time. Because of enrollment issues, this was not possible.

A second problem has to do with the structure itself. In the future I think it would be better to create a log that clearly delineates each part of the process. I think the structure was too loose. This might have led to a lack of focus and evaluation for some learners. Also, I would have students journal about their tapes and eliminate the general writing. Students felt that they did not have enough time to fulfill all of the requirements as well as they would have liked.

Thirdly, because I was interested to see how the process of strategy awareness would shape itself for each individual participant, and because I did not wish to influence goal and strategy choices, I did not do any explicit language learning strategy training. I am curious as to whether or not such training would have a greater impact on outcomes.

Many factors influence language learners' success with strategy awareness and use. There are many different ways to interpret the data that has been collected from this project. This report barely scratches the surface. It would be interesting to take a look at how learners from different cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds compare in their strategy use and willingness to try different ways of learning and practicing English. It would also be telling to examine what strategies are used at different levels of proficiency or for acquiring different skills. Do learners use different strategies in a variety of contexts? Would they use more and try others if they knew of them? Perhaps some students are just naturally more reflective and therefore benefit more than others from such activities. Perhaps it would be useful to have learners work collaboratively to discuss their strategy use and share best practices.

Throughout the history of the TESOL profession, while some educators and researchers sought out the best approaches, methods, and techniques to better aid their students in acquiring English as a second language, others looked to the learners, themselves, for insights which might ease the weight resting on the shoulders of teachers and students, alike. As in all educational disciplines, the search continues. As is the case with many issues in the field of TESOL, one good question simply leads to others. Perhaps it is in the good nature of educators to constantly seek out newer and better ways to enhance the learning behaviors of our students, particularly if we are asking the same of them.

Appendix A
PA-ARN Project
Questionnaire

Name ______________________________ Age ______________________

Country ____________________________ Native Language ________________

Other languages spoken ____

How long did you study English before coming to the US? ___________________

Where did you study? How long at each? Write the amount of time next to each that applies.

__________ elementary __________ junior high __________ high school

__________ university other (explain) ___________________________________

How long have you studied English in the US? _________________________

What is your main reason for studying English? (Check only one)

_____ personal interest _____ school _____ work

Have you taken the TOEFL? _____ yes _____ no Score __________

Do you plan to take the TOEFL? _____ yes _____ no

Did you have specific language learning goals before coming to the US? _____ yes _____ no

Do you think you met those goals? _____ yes _____ no

Why or Why not?
____
____

COMMENTS: ____
____
____

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix B
Self-Assessment

Name: ______________________________ Date: __________

Part 1:

1. a) How would you rate your English, in general, if #10 is perfect and #1 is poor? __________

b) What do you expect your ability level to be at the end of this course?

____

2. a) How would you rate your speaking ability now if #10 is perfect and #1 is almost no ability to speak English? __________

b) What do you expect your ability level to be at the end of this course?

____

3. a) How would you rate your listening ability now if #10 is perfect and #1 is understanding almost no English? __________

b) What do you expect your ability level to be at the end of this course?

____

Part 2:

1. a) How much time do you spend studying English at home? ____________________

b) What do you do? ____

2. a) How often do you watch TV? ____________________

b) What kinds of shows do you watch? ____

3. a) How often do you listen to the radio/music? ____________________

b) What do you listen to? ____

4. a) How often do you speak English outside of school? ____________________

b) With whom do you speak English? ____

5. I should do more...

____

____

____

____

Part 3:

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

6. When I don't understand someone speaking English I...

7. When English speakers don't understand me I...

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix C
Conversation Partners
PA-ARN Research Project
1999

Purpose: To find the best structure for students to use to improve their listening and speaking skills through participation in Conversation Partners

Method: To implement a specific structure requiring students to

A) identify goals
B) apply strategies to meet goals
C) evaluate process and progress

Evaluation: To compare performance (SLEP Test-listening pre/post scores), perceptions, and behaviors (CP journals, Self-assessment) at the beginning and end of the project

What's different?
Before starting this project, you were asked to write about your problems, concerns, and experience during your appointments with your partners, but you were not asked to do anything specific to solve problems or change the situation.

Now, each week you will

A) choose a language learning goal from listening to your tape (GOAL)
B) decide what to do to meet that goal the next time you meet with a partner (STRATEGY)
C) write about how well you did (EVALUATION)

An example of how it works.

Week 1: I listened to my tape and I realized that my partner speaks too fast. I cannot understand her all the time. I feel like I am missing a lot of the conversation. My goal is to understand everything.

Next time, my strategy will be to ask my partner to speak more slowly and repeat things when I do not understand the first time.

Week 2: (Journal Evaluation) After listening to my tape, I noticed that I asked my partner to slow down 4 times and to repeat 10 words. This helped me a lot. I could understand much more, but not everything my partner said. Some of the words were new and I still don't know what they mean. Next time, I will focus on understanding new words. If my partner says a new word, I will ask him/her to spell it and explain the meaning. I'll write it down. I will also continue to ask people to slow down and repeat when necessary.

Week 3: This time, I asked my partner to explain 4 new words. I wrote them down, but I am afraid that I will not remember the words later. Maybe some of the words are not so important to remember, but I think some are useful. Next time, I will try to use the words I learned when I am talking to my partner. Also, I'll review my new words list at the end of the week to check my memory.

Another thing that I noticed is that my partner corrects me when I say -ed endings. I must study when to pronounce those sounds. Next time, I will try to use them correctly.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Note: These are just some examples of the types of things you can study, try and learn during your participation in Conversation Partners. It's very important that you choose things that are important to you. This is a great chance for you to work on individual goals.

Have fun!

Appendix D
Conversation Partners
Final Project

Name ______________________________

For the questions below, rate your abilities on a scale from #1 to #5.
#5 is almost perfect ability and #1 is very low ability.

1. How would you rate your listening ability at the beginning of this course?

____

How would you rate your listening ability at the end of the course?

____

If your listening ability has changed, what can you do now that you could not do at the beginning of the course?

____

____

____

____

____

____

2. How would you rate your speaking ability at the beginning of the course?

____

How would you rate your speaking ability at the end of the course?

____

If your speaking ability has changed, what can you do now that you could not do at the beginning of the course?

____

____

____

____

____

____

References

Bialystok, E. (1981). The role of conscious strategies in second language proficiency.

Oxford, R. (1989). Language learning strategies: what every teacher□ should know. New York: Newbury House.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE